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Timişoara

ROMÂNIA

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BREAK

(born October 1, 1956), engineer, in Automatic Systems and Computer Engineering from Polytechnical Institute of Bucharest, 1981. Since 1982, computer analyst in a Special Computing Centre for Oil Research. After 1989, journalist at "Adevărul", the national independent newspaper. In 1990, after the invasion of Kuweit, special envoy to the Persian Gulf area. Since 1991, deputy editor-in-chief of that daily. Editor-in-chief of the weekly "Adevărul literar și artistic" since 1992. Prose writer, he had his maiden volume, *"Planetarium"*, published in 1987, for which he was awarded the Prize for SF literature of the Central Committee of the Union of Communist Youth. A 1987 recipient of the European Science Fiction Society prize (Montpellier), "pour son ouevre de nouvelliste". Other works: *"The Times of the Desiccated Colt"*1991, "The Empire of the Skewed Mirrors, International SF anthology; "Bug Jack Barron!" by Norman Spinrad, Romanian version (with M.D. Pavelescu).

He ties his shoelaces methodically, trying to equalize their loose ends. He takes his time tying and untying the bow; he can hear the muffled roar of the crowd outside, like the wind in the evening, amid the colossi in the Milla alleys. „Time, Mr Onemai," the polite voice announces meditatively. There is an uproar in the crowd, then applause – overwhelming, endless. Freas has entered the arena.

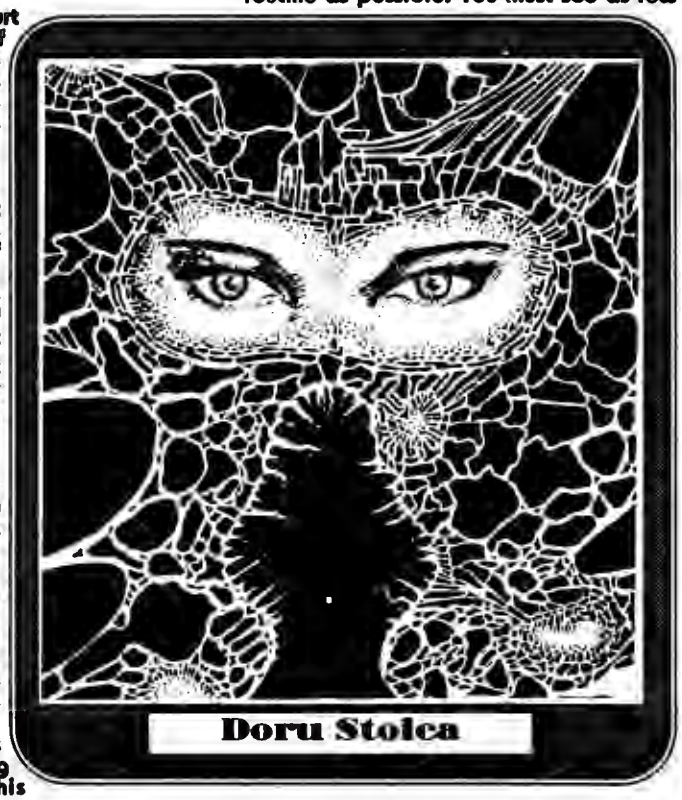
He is tense, he is aware of it, and his nervousness is still growing. Perhaps it would have been better for him to wait in the locker room where it is neither hot nor cold, it is quiet and dark as in mother's womb, nobody shouts at you and there are no flashes to scrape your retina. But how could he stay in the locker room when Papa Tob had decided differently?

He enters the court carrying a pile of rackets under his arm. As he has expected, the applause is conventional, cold. USCOTT MOWENNA MARLBORO MARLBORO FORS. It does not matter, he must not think of anything above all, he must be stunningly quick and implacable! He must be merciless, break and dominate. REC EDX STANDARD ELECTRIC BATA BATA BATA.

The green RAFLEX is pleasant to tread on, fleshy and elastic, its adherence exactly as it should be. When a playing surface is good, boy, you must have the sensation of walking on a man's chest. He glances at the grandstand. Papa Tob is in his seat, his silver hair falling over the collar of his tightly buttoned black shirt clearly distinguishes him from the motley crowd. Everything Papa Tob wears is beginning to look like a uniform.

He fails to make out Vera in the Crowd; she may be late, and if she is not coming at all, perhaps it is better like this. He casts another glance at Papa Tob, and although the latter is staring in another direction, somewhere above the scoreboard, he can just feel himself relaxing. He lays the rackets on the table, takes a few out of their covers and starts tapping their stringing against his palm, as if to try it. He knows exactly which racket he will use at the beginning of the match, they checked them together one hour ago, but Papa Tob's law cannot be broken, nor will he ever try to break it. Tennis is a ritual with masks, boy, an art of boredom, so to say. Everything you do when you are not playing must be as routine as possible. You must see as few faces as you can, hear as few words as possible and utter even fewer. Always use the same toothpaste, eat the same food, go to bed and wake-up at the established hours. Yes, Papa. Kiss the crucifix, make the same number of steps to the baseline, bounce the ball the same number of times. Don't change anything, ever, if you want to join tennis gods, if I may say so. If not, do nothing of all this, live and be happy. Yes, Papa.

He starts towards the baseline with balanced steps, his face rigid, impassive. In front of the circular opening of the dispenser he raises his hand and the balls come out, one, and three seconds later, another one. He lifts a ball to his nostrils and inhales deeply. At least ten cameras are following. Ullo Onemai's characteristic gesture. ONEMAI'S GIRLFRIEND WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING THE RIGHT FRAGRANCE. The gesture had to be done anyway, it was part of the standard sequence but he really liked the smell of new balls. It was always associated with that of the hot bitumen, pierced by dusty tufts of grass, behind the GANDRE supermarkets. At that time he was only a little loafer hitting with a bandager racket a ball eaten up to its rubber core whose



Doru Stoica

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Cristian Tudor Popescu

uncertain colour very much resembled that of his own skin. A new ball was a rare bird, a fresh flame which you reluctantly left a prey to the grey asphalt, the ball eater.

The area's speaker introduces the Masters finalists. Afterwards, until the moment the winner is announced, the computer alone will speak.

First, naturally, Freas. Martin Freas the artist, Martin Freas the gentleman. The man for whom tennis holds no secrets. Capable of sending ten consecutive balls into a racket placed on the opponent's baseline. Rosewall plus Santana, plus Năstase, plus Koebler, plus. The last Romantic. There always has to be such a last one. Roland Garros twice, Wimbledon once, the Masters tournament last year. That he is a bit old for the game no one even mentions. Thunderous applaud. Cheers. You'll give people a hard time learning to applaud you boy. You look... hm, rather funny, if I may say so. I bet at least a Chinese, a Negro and an Australian aboriginal collaborated on conceiving you. Never mind, their collaboration was fruitful, so to say, you've got a heart like a firemen's pump and not even Drablin had legs like yours. So you will play tennis, boy, that's your once-in-a-lifetime chance. Yes, Papa. I don't know what else you could do, you could be a bellboy or a busboy, at best, unless you become a junkie or a thief. Yes, Papa. The tennis you'll play, I'd better warn you, will not be pleasant to watch, but it will earn you enough money for people to say you-'ve got a... hm, fascinating face, if I may say so. You will rely on your force, determination and nervous balance; everybody will criticize you for your monotonous, unimaginative play, that is, for the fact that you don't put on an all-out fight, you don't take risks cutting the balls, you don't keep staring at the sky when you miss a shot. That's bullshit, if I may say so. The finest kind of tennis in the world is when you hit the ball over the net no matter how and you win. They will call you a robot, an automaton, a tennis machine, tabloids will insinuate you are in fact an android, the „imaginative," whom you will thrash will make offensive statements about you. That's all bullshit! As soon as you've won a fair number of games, everybody will start swarming around you like flies on a corpse, if I may say so, because everybody wants to breathe the bracing air of success. Your monotony will be give out as „playing assurance and tenacity," your insensitivity as „extraordinary capacity for concentration," the lack of beauty of your shots as „extreme efficiency." But until then you must win, keep winning, boy. Yes, Papa.

„Two minutes, gentlemen." They start serving. His balls, catapulted at 280 km per hour, obediently go to the corners of the service court. Freas's services are slower and he lifts the ball too high. Like a gentleman. He has not finished smiling and blowing kisses at the crowd. „One minute, gentlemen." It is good to play in a large hall... noises are attenuated, the audience turns into an amorphous mass, you can concentrate much more easily than outdoors, where there are clouds, wind, the sky, a bird or a jet plane. Too bad the ILTF did not approve the soundproofing of the court. The idiots in the stands cannot bear to bark at the moon, as it anyone cared about their bustle and shouts." „Time, gentlemen."

Run. Turn your trunk around. Draw your arm back. Bend your knees. Push your shoulder forward. I said your shoulder. Keep your eyes on the ball up to the last moment. Strike. Run. Turn your trunk around. Draw your arm back, bend your knees. Look at the ball. Strike. Run. Turn around. Draw back. Bend. I told you to bend your knees, boy, are you deaf?

He feels good, although he is 4-3 down. This game will bring the score to 4-4. Not even losing the set is worrying him, we are playing a best-of-five match, dude, no tie-breaker in the final set, let's see how long you can last. Besides, the points he has won so far have been dull and uncontroversial, while Freas has scored from irrepeatable shots, true artisanry. This cannot last much longer, one cannot win a match with such shots. Advantage in. He looks at Papa Tob. The latter is carelessly passing his hand over his forehead: It's OK, go on. He will no longer serve so powerfully, he feels is ready to close his eyes and strike, and, as chance would have it, his blind returns almost always land inbounds. He lifts the ball a lot. Net ball. First service. The ball has hit the top of the net, but landed in the service court, bounced a few times and reached the feet of Freas who remained motionless, waiting impassively for the ball to stop bouncing and be sucked out of the court. Bad omen, it means the dude is still calm.

He lifts the ball even higher and stays on the baseline. A

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prolonged forehand cross-court rally. You must avoid his backhand, that is his forte.

He speeds up his shots. Uncomfortable, Freas tries to change the tempo with a forehand down the line, but his stroke falls short. Forward! He emphatically slices the ball down the line and rushes to the net. Freas arrives late at the ball and lobs it. The lob is high and may be out. He decides against running after it. The red light goes on, the ball has landed just wide of the baseline. „Out!" crows the computer, „Out!" flashes the central scoreboard. „Game to Mr.Onemai. Four games all."

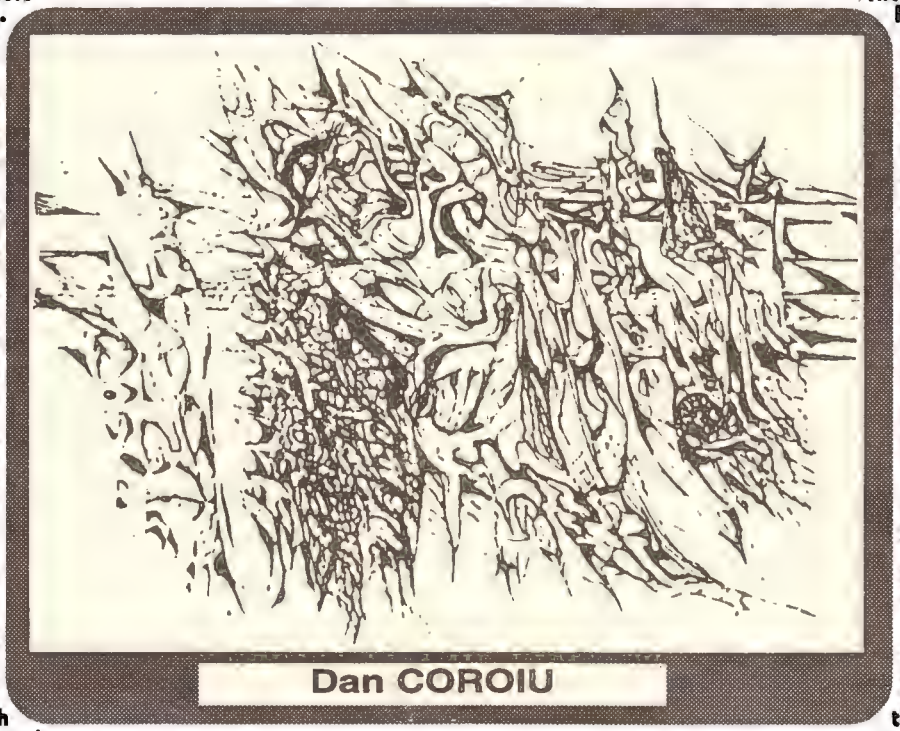
He leaves the court with relaxed steps. He stops in front of the door which slides noiselessly, clearing the entrance to his corridor, while, through the same motion, blocking the entrance to Freas's corridor. As soon as he crosses the threshold, the door resumes its original position. He enters the dressing room and sits in the hydraulic armchair. The cool jets of the fans bathe his face and chest, the vibrators knead his arms and legs. The screen flashes a play of cold peaceful colors, accompanied by music. Polo Anders singing „Home Again." Relax, forget. Remember, boy, efficient relaxation during the break is worth more than a devastating service. There are old hands at this game who have not yet learned this „Time, Mr.Onemai." The warning device buzzes and blinks in the penumbra. Let's go! He empties his glass of CIVITA and gets out of the dressing room; on the other side of the thin wall, exactly halfway down the corridor, he can hear the other's steps going in the opposite direction. You're still lively, dude, or you only want to seem so...

Run. Hit. Run. Hit. Run. The fatigue is catching up with him. It is not physical fatigue proper, it is always the brain that breaks down first. He can feel it coming, the signs are imperceptible but unmistakable. You reach the ball a fraction of a second too late, you hesitate to run after a cut ball, – he's crazy, he has used drop shots at least 20 times so far – you regretfully rise from your armchair when play I resumed. It does not show from the grandstand, but your mind is no longer on the game, the worst consequence of your fatigue. The vacuum sucks the balls outside the court, the dispenser spits one ball, and tree seconds later, another one. You make a swinging motion, throw the ball upwards with your left hand, it rises, stands out like a yellow UFO under the sparkling floodlights. It freezes for a moment in unlikely immobility, then falls and, with it, you dive forward, slicing the shot from your shoulder. How many times have you done it before? How many times since you started playing tennis have you raised your arms to serve? One hundred thousand times, a million times? Lying in ambush behind your mind is danger: surrender, weariness, meaninglessness. Let it all end sooner, no matter how, only let it end. How does the old man across the net manage to look so fresh? He can't be, he must be at least as tired.

3-2 and 40-15. Two break points. At 4-2 and with a service game ahead, it's over between two players of their caliber. Over,my foot! For a moment the three match points Freas saved in the third set come back to his mind, but he manages to cast them away. Nothing is ever over, boy. Yes, Papa. Everything can change in one second. Yes, Papa. You seminate, you feel you are in control of the game, you almost feel sorry for the other, look how he's running around inefficiently for your winners which land just inside the lines, he's no match cientlу for you, you're great, you try all kinds of shots, and everything comes up roses, If I may say so. But it takes a few tens of seconds of losing your concentration and squandering a few points for things to be upset as in a kaleidoscope. First a vague chill of fear, which you quickly repress; I've begun to make errors, but never mind, I'm still well ahead of him. Then the fear grows with each shit, you hit the ball with excessive care, avariciously, afraid you might lose, but you're already lost. As chance would have it, all your balls hitting the top of the net do not get over it, while his own land a few inches from the net, for all your shots that go just wide of the line there are as many shots of his that land just inside the line, If I may say so. You are so angry, you are on the brink of tears. You cling desperately to every ball, but, more often than not, there is nothing to be done. There is no beginning and no end to a match, boy. You play the match all the time, you live immersed in it, so to say. Yes, Papa.

Run, strike, run. Freas has almost imperceptibly won two points, with his damned sliced backhand, the ball does not bounce even a few inches off the ground. A glance at Papa Tob. The answer comes promptly and clearly: right, hammer the ball to his right. Yes, Papa, sure, one hundred, one thousand strokes to the dude's right, he'll never use his backhand again. A moment's vision, TITAN STADIUM deserted in ruins, the whole world a ruin under a reddish sun, piercing through chloric clouds, and he and Freas continuing their forehand rally.

Advantage. He charges the net behind a soft shot. Even he cannot tell why he does it. Freas's passing shot is perfect, he cannot reach it, although he stretches himself as much as he can. Freed for a fraction of a second by this effort, his subconscious orders the holding at the precise moment when the ball goes past the ton of his racket. The grandstand murmurs excitedly, it is the first holding of the final; most people know that. Ullo Onemai has used this trick eight times during the past six days of the tournament and one more may prove fatal. But he has not forgotten Spotty Bauer; he thought of him whenever he resorted to a holding. No neuropsychiatrist had succeeded in satisfactorily explaining Sporty's miraculous capacity for managing 15-20 holdings during a match , while no other player could do more than three. Sometimes he would ridicule his opponent playing a whole game with his eyes alone. Many had affirmed that Bauer was born telekinetist, he did not even need ACBCs, his talent could manifest itself anywhere outside the court. But no one could prove anything; the audience would acclaim in a rapture, the International Federation had even intended to abolish that device under pressure from the Association of Tennis Players, banning ACBCs from tennis courts; however the public's will eventually prevailed. The fact is that Spotty, holding or not, had the makings of a great player, could have made his mark anyway, but people wanted that particular trick from him and nothing else. When he played without holding, no matter how well, they almost hissed him off the court. Agents used to look desperately everywhere for someone to be pitted against him: many dreamt of staging THE MATCH OF THE CENTURY: RACKETLESS TENNIS. THE TENNIS OF THE FUTURE! Two pictures of Spotty had remained clearly engraved in his mind: Spotty collapsed near the netpost, writhing and roaring like a wild beast, and Spotty in the sanatorium yard, a sort of boulder with an empty stare and a slobbering mouth. And there were also Gothard and Alderman and Sarrasino, all reduced to a catatonic existence by the holding game.



Dan COROIU

It is too late to go back now: for a few seconds now the ball has been slightly shaking one metre above the ground, held there by his will converted into physical action and amplified thousands of times by the ACBCs. He assumes his position for striking, slowly, without taking his eyes off the ball and Freas, who stands motionless a few steps from the net, with a note of amazement in his eyes': he too naturally knows about the eight holdings. Here, take this one! The ball, hit with all his might, has gone somewhere down the line. Freas has not moved; could he be so self-assured?

The crowd burst into loud applause. This time, the applause is strong and real. He starts slowly towards the court. His brain is jarring. He regrets that Vera is not the grandstand, but he lacks the courage to look at Papa Tob after he has done. The doors slide simultaneously; he enters the dressing room and drops in an armchair. There is a wire brush going up and down his cortex. The fans, the vibrators, the

revitalizing solutions are doing their duty, but his head, his head... It is a terrible sensation, as if your mind were falling to pieces. Suddenly, the peaceful sounds cease, and Freas appears on the screen triumphant, smiling, superb, raising the cup above his head. Everybody gathers around him. Somewhere near the sideline he can see himself looking like a sick ostrich, harasses by a few sadistic reporters. The suprarenal glands pour adrenaline into his blood, the spinal chord orders his muscles ti contract, his pulse and breath are accelerated. The body drags the brain after it. He rises with difficulty but eventually stands up and goes out into the corridor. On the other side of the wall impervious to biocurrents he can hear the other's steps; he starts pounding the wall with his fist, shouting „Old creep! Dirty bastard!"

Physical fitness holds no more secrets in sports today. Practice techniques, the equipment, the diet, can no longer undergo essential improvements, if I may say so. The time has come for systematic psychic practice. More than that: for a psychic conditioning of the sportsman. A well trained morale can throw into the battle incredible physical an willing resources; have you ever seen, gentlemen, an anemic paranoiac having a fit, who breaks a massive oak table lenghtwise?

It is more than a man can take. Everything is against him: the net band which has denied him a match point, the computer which crows: „Out!" when he has fully hit the line, they must have tampered with the programs, everybody hates him, everybody wants to see him lose. The colored jellies, the idiots chewing gum, the blockheads in the grandstand. What a shame the holding only works at a few meters' distance, how wonderful it would be to lift the stands in the air and then drop them, turning them to pieces. God, how close I was! 5-2 in the decisive set, that was how far his anger had taken him. One game... The everything was broken, the dude held his serve and broke back once, earning a loud ovation with every point he won, simply carried to victory. It is 5-5 and Papa Tob motions to him to attack, but he only wants to hold his serve after that anything can happen.

Risks, one certainly has to take risks, how else? Have you ever heard of progress without risks, if I may say so? I can even give you an example: Enrique Soler, an obscure Brazilian sprinter, became a national champion overnight with a time within three hundreds of a second of the world record. How was that? Quite simple: they embedded in his mind the certainty that he was pursued by a furious tiger, a certainty which was a activated at the sound of the starting pistol shot. The problem was that the tiger did not give up, so to say, it started following him in the street, at home and in his sleep, until the boy escaped him by jumping over a banister. Well, that only proves that his psychic training had been made by an amateur.

Serve... run... hit... run... Everything in much more difficult, even his drive, the drive which has always helped him, is now forced and lacks explosiveness. It is still 40-30 and he is seized with fear: if he wins this point, he wins the game. He looks at Papa Tob like a child in an orphanage through the railing on the street side fence. Papa Tob calmly motions to him: forward, approach the net. He serves and dives forward as if shot, praying for Freas to miss the return. And Freas... misses: the ball, mis-hit with the racket frame, lobs flutteringly over him and lands one metre inside the baseline. He looks hypnotized at its flight, unable to believe such a monstrous swindle of

fun for it. The crowd, who were raising their hands and preparing to cheer the victory, freeze: the ball stops a few inches from its second contact with the RAFLEX. Ulio Onemai-s tenth holding. With a drunkard's steps, he approaches the ball, intently staring at it: he kneels and slowly, very slowly, brings it to eye level. He remains in that position for a few seconds, then, without getting up, starts like a penitent towards the gate of the cathedral. It takes him nearly two minutes to reach the net. Freas is waiting, disconcerted, arms akimbo, everybody has got to their feet. He gets up slowly, keeping the ball level with his eyes. When the distance is short enough, Freas drops his arms from his hips and becomes tense; the roar of the crowd grows suddenly: double holding. A rare and dangerous situation to both players: apart from gravity, one has to defeat the opponent's will too. The cameras are focused on the two faces, careful that the frame should include also MOWENNA or GUCKO or FORS, depending on the endorsement contract; alternate closeups are beamed, showing the swollen veins and tightened jaws of the 23-year-old an man, short and brown-haired, and the almost closed eyes and death-pale face of the 15-year-old, tall, brick-haired, the ball slowly seesawing between them. Then, suddenly Freas turns around and starts towards the back of the court. Ulio Onemai raises his racket and strikes. The ball hits Freas in the back of his neck; the crowd starts hissing and booing.

A tennis court of red, trodden clay somewhere on the ocean shore. Players moving in a strange way as if in a slow motion film. Is this some kind of tennis too, Papa? Yes, boy, it is, or rather, if I may say so. It was.

Vera laughs. She is carrying her copybooks under her arm. It is raining with black, shining drops. Other images and words keep surfacing from the rummaged mud of the mind. The rotten cross knocked down among red apples, now you must learn to hate, boy, otherwise you'll never get to the top, later you'll play against yourself, a huge ball cannon throws balls of all colors which hit him in the head, only in the head, a white racket silhouetted against the Caribbean sky, tennis is a lonely sport, boy.

He has been sitting in his armchair for thousands of years, like a pharaoh's statue. What does a stone feel when you leave it alone? You come, you go, you think, you are sad, but what does it do during all this time?, doesn't out go crazy? It doesn't go crazy because it is happy. Oh, to be paralysed, to lie motionless in a wheelchair all your life and nobody to be able to force you out of that chair. To be earth, rock, sand, to sleep on the ocean-floor, with billions of tons of water above your head, in the dark, in silence.

Papa Tob is standing before Freas. Papa Tob's hands are tied. The lawn is dark green. What's the matter, Papa, whoever tied you, why are you standing, why don't you lie down, why don't you lie flat on the grass, on the earth, if I may say so, if I may say so, Papa?

Papa Tob is dressed in black as usual. Freas, in tennis clothes, is holding a racket-shaped piece of metal in his hand. Freas spits Papa Tob in the face. Something is throbbing.

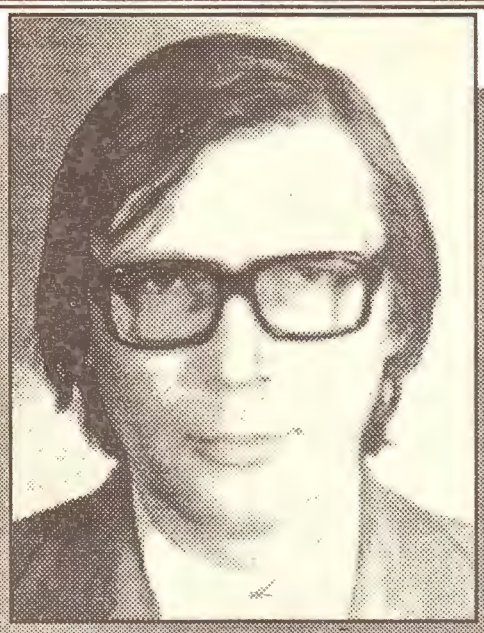
Papa Tob down on his knees, Freas strikes him with the metal racket. Once, and once more. Papa Tob's face, like a squeezed tomato. Something is vibrating unbearably, the head is cemented, sunk in concrete, the body is out, something clutches, something pulls, stretches, snatches. Vera is coming, dancing. Something breaks, a white burning, flashing tearing. Freas and Vera embrace passionately.

„Time, Mr.Onemai." He rises and goes out into the corridor.

Ionuţ BĂNUŢĂ

Translated by

Anda TEODORESCU



THE HOUSE

Name: Gramescu; Christian Name: Mihail;
The sun of: (Father) Grămescu Haralambie- writer and (Mather) Kiseleff Alexandra Beatrice former TV interpretor and newspaper journalist
Born: in Bucarest on 16 february 1951
Educated: 1958-1966 all-round school; 1966-1971 high school; 1976 qualified in the laboratory assistance; 1993 Certificate of literary councelor
Jobs: 1970 BCS (Central Estate Library); 1973-1989 Laboratory asistant; 1992 newspaperman at the Ştiinţă şi Tehnică magazine
Profession: writer (fellow of National Writers Union)
Writer debut: in magazines with pieces of poetry (1967); in volume: *"Aporisticon"* (Albatros,1981); *"Moara de apă"* (Cartea Românească, 1989); *"Phrearia"* (Porto Franco, 1990)
Contribution: at the literary magazines such as from 1967- pieces of poetry (*Luceafărul, Steaua, Convorbiri literare, Argeşul*), from 1979 fiction: (*Vatra, Luceafărul, Scînteia tineretului, Viaţa Românească, Magazin, Argeş);* from 1992 *Science fiction: Jurnalul SF, Ştiinţă şi Tehnică*); from 1981: *Almanahul Anticipaţia, Almanahul Viaţa Românească, Realitatea ilustrată, Almanahul Magazin, Almanahul Cinema*
Romanian and foreign antology: *O antologie a anticipaţiei româneşti, Nici un zeu în Cosmos, Povestiri ciberrobotice, Povestiri despre invenţiile mileniului III, Avertisment pentru liniştea planetei, Întîmplări dintr-un univers al păcii* and so on.
foreign: Antares (France) nr.19 and 24; Gradina (Jugoslavia) nr.6/1985; Teren es idon tul (Hungaria),1988
Foreign Magazines and Antologies published in Romania: Az Osserobbanas (Albatros), 1987; Revue Roumaine 5/1988 (in french, english, rushen, german)
Prizes and Distinctions: Prizes of the National Writers Union (Tîrgovişte, 1978); Prizes of "Ştiinţă şi tehnică" (1982) for the volume "Aporisticon", Prize at "H. Coandă" Workshop, Prize for the most read SF writer at the Yearly Contest of SF literature and art, 1987; Prize Socoon, 1989; Prize SESF (Eurocon) at the 6th SF Festival from Fayence- Pouretes (France), 1990.

1. Beyond the high plateau, split by the canyon of the troubled and fertile river, on the very edge of the Forest, there rises solitary, ramshackle and skinny, the Sons'House.

It is a massive but primitive construction, half-timbered, with buttresses of red bricks and pointed turrets. It is a deserted house where at some time in the past some tormented souls strove hard to weave a tissue more precious than any other in the world – a material out of which only royal and pontifical gowns are made, dyed purple.

2. Behind the porch supported by marble columns with veins the colour of blood, there opens the Common Hall – domed, dark and cold. Without any other furniture except the tall-backed armchairs carved in ebony, with floral intarsia out of which are grinning distorted masks, torn by mute howls, as if the weeds and the flowers around tore their invisible bodies, ready to swallow them in the endless vegetal euphoria. The legs of the armchairs end in paws, whose steel claws scratch the stone slabs, butchering the marble out of whose flesh trickle the veinless of stone-porphyry – the most expensive dye in the world.

The clutches have cracked with so much scratching and now provokingly catch at the hair of the footwear and of the clothes of the sons.

3. Hartanj, the fair-haired lad with dark and deep eyes approaches the armchair in which his Elder Brother is drowsing.

The Elder Brother's face is deeply furrowed, as if carved in wood. His wrinkles pucker up in a harsh frown, expressing suffering and hatred. The boy feels attracted by the secret of the ruthless and cruel face like the blade of a sword. He feels attracted and at the same time repelled.

The body rumbling in sleep sucks him up and Hartanj draws ever nearer, bending over until he collapses as if into a well in which the sky is upturned, identifying himself wrinkle after wrinkle, eye after eye, muscle after muscle – as if in a stained glass window. The corns on his hands are the traces of the tools with which the Elder Brothers have (long) been working on raising every monument around them and the other monuments of the world and of the Moon, as it is and as it has been destined to him as a heritage. The hands are rough with the handles of the steel weapons. And the boy is thrilled by the edge of the terrible memory when the beheaded skull of the moon rolls over into the troubled eye in the den, to play with it rolling it over in the dust of the road which passes right in front of the den which is the hovel of the Mothers.

4. A large head, with grizzly beard and tresses giving off a remote perfume of milk and spices (beyond the salty smell of blood).

Drawn by its long beard, the skull rolls from one boulder to another, occasionally showing now the skin of its face, white and thin like parchment, now the nape where instead of the neck there is a small withered wen like a transparent petiole hanging from the stamina through which chlorophyle light comes as if through a sturdy glass.

5. „Brother...," the child whispers. „Brother He does not know which brother this one is because all his Elder Brothers are very much alike.

The man gives a start and raises his blue eyes from the depths in a frozen glance.

Catching sight of the boy, his tension relaxes into a smile like rays through the clouds.

Yes! Now he recognizes him again! The boy touches the calf of the leg entrapped in the black mantle, supporting himself on it in order to reach the tight lips of the Elder Brother who in a bland gesture ruffles his fair hair rebelling at the top of his head.

„Hey, Wolf!" the Elder Brother tells him in a broken voice.

„Hey, Hamster!" the young one rejoices, playing with the hilt of the dagger on the giant's side.

„Now, Wolf!" the man repeats, wrestling himself out of the embrace of the armchair.

Tufts of white fur have already flourished in his whiskers.

„Come on!" the little one says. „The moment has come! The women have brought the animals. It is evening. They are waiting outside and because the Sisters who love the Elder Brothers have not yet returned, they do not want to enter this place. That is why they have sent me over to call you."

„Yes, women are not allowed in here," the man confirms. „And you are already grown up. It is only now I notice how much you have grown."

6. When they come out together, they stop for a moment as if dazzled. It is an extraordinary evening: the sun is setting, the flowers are bending their violet calyxes, pouring their intoxication, while behind the wattle fence the animals are whining gently, crowding together.

Elbowing her way among the women, a frail girl is approaching, offering them the traditional bread and salt. On the tray, in the water bottle is trembling a tiny speck of the sun, trickling among the small coppers of the leaves scattered by some remote sower.

This girl is Hartanj's sister, much about his age. In the den of the Mothers they used to sleep in each other's arms and, before going to sleep, she often told him how much she loved the Elder Brother.

7. To love the Elder Brother is great unhappiness. To love the Elder Brother means to love the underground clay moulds, with inlaid signs and the cold darkness in the Sons' House, in which the women are not allowed to come, and only

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girls occasionally penetrate (their true face concealed by flowered batiks) to bring them bread and salt on clean trays. The Elder Brothers propped on their long swords, stretch their rough hands out to the children, to receive their portions and it is then that the girls who love them scatter their tresses on the hems of their mantles, all expectant of the parting embrace, that being the only way in which they are allowed piously to express their feelings for them. In this way, this girl who loves the Elder Brother beyond natural feelings, is exempted from the sufferings and labors of the world. Neither her brother, nor her master, nobody has access to her alcove, in the white wedding mourning, as long as the Elder Brother has nor yet flown away. And, if she wishes, even afterwards she may wait for him – tacitly, the Elder Brothers ensure her immunity.

8. The stallion writhes in the dust. The men agitate around him, skillfully manipulating the heavy metal tools whose sharp edges shine in their hands. The long head tears away, with its eyes bulging with horror and pain, looking over the rump at the squatting men. Hardly has he noticed the flash of the scalpel when pain shoots through him... His trembling legs give a start and the earth darkens under him.

After the stallions it is the turn of the winged bulls, rams and black he-goats, tups and flying cocks. A new race will haunt the Plain of the smokes with the Dens of Mothers, pushed forward by the elan of expansion.

It is to the mothers that belongs infinitude – a mother calling her sons to lay their heads in her lap like a night embroidered with stars.

In the whining of the kneeling animals, infinitude only opens to the Elder Brothers and to their machine: out of wheels, harnesses, levers and winches, scalpels, lances, ropes, turbines, four-stroke cylinders, pistons, exhaust pipes moved by horses and by fat oxen, by gentle capones, by submissive eagles, by the asphyxiating steam of coal, uranium, helium.

Through a magic subterfuge, Man, the Elder Brother proudly establishes his dominion.

9. They are telling tales about the Girl ravished, in whose honor they drink out of the pot-bellied tankards, now and then pouring a few drops on the earth. The torches cause incandescent butterflies to flutter on their beards and laughter gurgles in their throats like a night liquid.

They say she used to be an uncommonly beautiful and gentle girl. The stranger, a phantom (being strangers they can hardly be anything but shadows of wandering souls) must have been egged on by the master. They say that over there, in the next world, in the crater out which strangers came up, that is how girls are stolen.

Most probably, the envious master had also coveted the girl but had feared the Elder Brothers.

The stranger had lured her into the forest. Her long hair had spread like fiery

Gilbert COLOBANEA

ink towards the two young does sniffing the free air of the Forest behind the Sons' House.

But when night fell, the crowd of Elder Brothers thronged at the gate between the marble columns. Their faces were petrified with hatred and their eyes flashed flames.

Tears in his eyes, the master confessed everything to them and they tore him apart with their heavy steel paws.

They sniffed the track of the phantom and went as fast as a storm into the Forest which whispered in fright. They passed over the villages like a gale, fluttering their black frozen wings. The chestnut trees and the huge cedars closed behind them, and the red sign of the yew-tree wept, creaking long under the oppression of the wings of darkness.

When their swords no longer brought light, in their strong hands, held aloft, the sky above the virgin forest filled with flames and blood and out of the depths of the Jungle there rose a remote howl like that of a huge agonizing animal whose agitation caused the earth to quake.

10. The mud-huts dug in the red clay of the tall plateau send smoke through their low chimneys. There, in the depths, numberless galleries weave through the body of the planet in the concentric levels of a city sunk for very many generations.

„Come on!" the Elder Brother told the child.

In the light of the torches, the sweating faces turn towards them, with vacant glances. His sister in the depths has followed them up to the foot of the Forest, but there she too has stopped, tears in her eyes. Not even the girls are allowed to go further tonight, or the Mothers or the Masters when the Elder Brother has called a young one, has touched the latter's feeble shoulder and has started with him towards the Forest.

On a night like this, the Forest is haunted. Huge shadows with wings fluttering in the wind, slink through the algae under the huge Moon, covering the whole of the sky with its yellow waxen mask from which the upturned constructions hang head down wards, as clear as crystal.

All ringed, the eyes fill with tears; it is only those of the Elder Brothers that kindle red in the night, as guides through abysses.

At some time, at dawn, one of them (one never knows which, because all Elder Brothers are perfectly alike) will take flight on the wing.

It is in expectation of this soaring that the young crowd the Sons' House, dark and cold.

11. They chased him through thickets until his clothes and his very flesh were torn by the wooden teeth of the trunks and branches. And then they beat him black and blue. At daybreak his bruises attested the terrible sufferings to which he had been subject. With red hot tongs they had torn hunks of his haunches, slaughtering him. They drove long, hooked needles into his body. They sprinkled earth on his head and hands, to have him grow wings, too have his torn back bud forth, to harshen his sweet features of a child.

And when at long last they set a weapon in his hand he noticed, in the

blurred light of the night, that dark drops were trickling out of the heavy and hot blade.

Some of those who go into the Forest with the Elder Brothers, return safe and sound and become Masters. Such are those who get lost.

Others cannot put up with tortures. They are few , it is true, but there are also those about whom it is said that „they got lost in the Forest."

Yet most of them return in order to take shelter in the Sons' House, in accordance with the law of the Father. They do not suffer the approach and warmth of women which remain for ever alien to them. It is they that carry a sword and become the Elder Brothers ruthless and cruel.

And it is said that some of them Fly.

12. At dawn, when they brought him into the courtyard the men had finished gelding the animals. He heard the latter's howls and rattle, but no longer asked, as had done in his childhood why the blood of all of them is spilt on one of them alone and why it is precisely that one that will be the Heir.

They abandoned him, unwrapped in his black mantle, in the guarded secret room of the Sons' House.

He felt so sick he could not budge. It was only in the mirror of the metal body of the Rocket before him that he had the image of stone in which sufferings had dug deep furrows.

13. When Hartanj woke up, he discovered in the metal mirror of the rocket body that on his shoulders there were two knobs of flesh from which rose the stubs of wings.

One of his cheeks had rotted purple.

Next to him, in the bed made of tatters he found a coat of mail, woven out of thin aluminum threads cut so low as to allow freedom of movement to his naked shoulders, with the membranous wings hanging through the openings. Over it a sword of shining steel had been laid.

It was a very solid sword, with two blades, deep groves and the hilt cast in one piece with the blade. He lifted it with difficulty, but he turned round because he heard a kind of rustle behind him. He was met by the eyes – like black lightning – of the Elder Brother – preparing for the Flight. The Elder Brother nodded assent and, because he had taken off his mantle, Hartanj was free to admire his wings spreading down to his heels. Under his delicate skin, his blue veins throbbed perceptibly.

They embraced in emotion.

When Hartanj, exhausted by the effort again lay down, next to the shining metal weapon, the Elder Brother resumed his seat in the armchair, his hand on his knees and his brow bending over him. The tips of the long, dark tresses caressed his own forehead, soothingly.

„Welcome, Son!" the Elder Brother greeted him.

14. Hartanj remained the last Elder Brother in the Sons' House. When his Sister, who was in love with the Elder Brother, brought in the bread and salt, to squat at his feet after dinner, she didn't recognize him. His face was now like that of all the Elder Brothers who never hold a woman in their arms.

As a token of affection, she dropped a tear from her frozen blue eye on his forehead.

15. It was only on reaching the corridor leading to the Flightgear behind the Sons' House, that Hartanj could notice how badly the boards of the steps had been worn by the flyers who had preceded him.

Hesitantly, he approached the jumping board beyond which there lay the interstellar abyss. A body as white as silver and of immense proportions flashed in front of the entrance, for a moment blocking his exit.

He drew back in fright, but then he approached again, as much as he could, the end of the jumping board. Below, somewhere in the depth, one could see the cut contour of the hemisphere, with the sharp ropes, piercing the amorphous clay. At the lowest level, one could catch sight of the fiery heart of the planet throbbing and casting sparks into chaos.

He took one more step and he was surprised to notice how easily he could detach himself from that platform whose edges were marked by red lights, while in the centre it had a green phosphorescent strip, springing forward and alternating with dark moments, like an enormous arrow pointing to the abyss.

He stood up in a last step for ever unfinished, his sword directed at the celestial body which for a fraction of a second twinkled from behind the hemisphere in bluish iridescence on the edges of the thick layers of the stratosphere. And all at once, without heading anything, he rose in a flight which was both speedy and even. His breath froze on his lips and his wings spread naturally, in a forgotten, age-old memory.

Beyond the curve of the hemisphere, the Sons' House once more bared its decayed teeth before perishing altogether in the distance together with the lights in its windows. It was only the smallest wavelengths reached him from behind, but even the spectrum of these had palpably glided towards red.

And then the starless sky of the space beyond the bounds of the galaxy spread all around, in all its blind plenitude, swallowing him.

16. The moment when Hartanj's soles were detaching themselves from the threshold, somewhere in the world a child was born destined to fill the vacancy left by him in the house of the sons, invoked on each coming towards going.

Translated by
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VLADIMIR COLIN

Indeed, the dead houses were standing upright. Wherever the few fissures, gapes in the walls, let the beams show their worn out ends, a bed would hover motionless – a butterfly in a gigantic insectarium – then a carpet would soar, as stiff as a tin tent. The statue, torn off, the cracked gable wall had collapsed without turning upside down and, half-sunk in the ashes, the pitch woman was still stretching forth her hands in a vain prayer addressed to the crumpled signs and the metallic carcasses emerging from the gray uniformity. If one could overlook the pulverized windows wherein the sun had blazed screamingly, wherein human faces had passed now and then, the facades more often than not seemed untouched, although they were all in mourning, being covered by a black, cheap and very old paint, so very old that it had cracked all over. Black deep inside, these cracks bereft one of all hopes.Like some hypertrophied turkey claws raised towards the sun, the slag trees, bare of leaves were propping up an improbable sky, of a ludicrous blue in the futile quiet around, wherefrom both flowers and cactuses had disappeared. They had long been burnt to ashes, like the human thoughts, barren blankets, a shroud over the corpse devoid of corpses.

A mere breath of wind stirred the superficial layer of dust. Having suddenly turned into a rolling column that rose to the height of the one that was still breathing where all other breaths had ceased, the dead whirlwind started racing at a crazy speed; but, coming soon to a standstill in front of a nonexistent obstacle, the vertical whirligig got panic-stricken, dizzily rushing left and right, as well as backwards, fidgetting as if it had shifted its feet in order to make a final and desperate assault. But it changed its mind as unexpectedly as it had set out and raced on as absurdly and stubbornly as before, while dancing jerkily round him as if had tried hard to convey a certain massager, which could be expressed but by the complete incoherence of it's motion.

Like a child's thought, be thought then, and his discouraged looks lingered on the murdered street. The whirlwind was screwing into the ashen layer. Everything stood still again under the blue sky and he walked on between the rows of calcined trees which he had been so familiar with; black window sashes and gates swollen like drowned bodies were twisting now in those trees. The wood seemed to be worked up inside as if by a mischievous yeast, but the dark yeast had attacked it from the outside. The wood was not to blame, one could have made anything out of it.

He recognized the old square. Everything was in a state of chaos, a motionless rider whose gallop had rubbed the centuries to powder. A routine phenomenon, he told himself, he had experienced it dozens of times during the weeks of practical training and the sole novel thing was his graduation, hence the first real mission he had been entrusted with. Why was he feeling so worried? As if in search of an answer, he looked at each of the monumental buildings that enclosed the square.

Towering over it, from the height of the gable walls, a noble succession of allegories, as it were, men and women turned into stone were obstinately indulging in their illusions, the illusions of those who kept imagining allegories in an epoch that had not yet lost its illusions. Both the epoch and the illusions had disappeared, but the stone was tenacious. After all, it might have been right.

He climbed the wide staircase, side-stepping the man's broken shadow cast, like a runner, over the steps. The gates were hanging wryly from their hinges, the dust and the ashes had covered the floors surrounded by massive walls, embracing the feet of the marble pillars. With balanced gestures, commanded by a strange feeling of surprise whose reason he failed to understand, he took out his kitbag, laid it on the dead layer and prepared to call back to his mind the previous night, the last one. He could hear his breath. He established the contacts. The well-known signal distilled the warning sounds. At that moment he pushed the needle and found himself steeped in a darkness which he perceived at once as being special. Not because of the absence of light. Although he was waiting for them, he started when hearing the sounds of life and unconsciously rushed to one of the windows, imprudently passing by the sleeping janitor, who had reappeared in his booth.

The square was ablaze with hot globes, the petrified rider look as if gilded. Glaring lights the building facades and they glot extinguished at the touch of the walls. Colored vehicles were swarming about, giving a short growl, but what impressed him most was the big crowd that was crossing the square. They were walking, laughing, talking and gesticulating under his eyes, without showing in any way that they could foresee what was in store for them the following day and thus letting him enjoy together with them. The waste of the time that had elapsed so very bitterly for a long time, a time that had ceased to exist for him. It was a stolen time, a time risen from the dead, as it were, the alien time of an alien world and everything closely resembled the type of show he had watched so frequently when a student, every thing had come to be beyond retrieve and could not be revived any longer.

The last time, on the Arhaura flooded by the waters that had almost stifled the tiny planet, the artificial world which had been resurrected was engaged in a fierce fight with the waters, and in the company of his mates from the Emergency Institute, he had watched the futile efforts made by these doomed people, clinging up to the las moment, to the hope that the feverishly erected jetties would hold out against the floods. He witnessed then the writhing movement of the doomed mankind and, although they could hardly

WITHIN THE CIRCLE, CLOSER AND CLOSER

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refrain from flying to the aid of the people collapsing in the roaring black waters, before their very eyes; their professor, however, had to remind them of the law that forbade such a huge alteration of the past, it being a source of temporal intricacies, with countless consequences. Everything confirmed the already known tragical order. That moment, nevertheless, the life of the peaceful summer night seemed sinister.

„Stel!", someone whispered in his ear. „Stel!"

„Yap."

„Has anything happened?"

„Nothing special," said Stel, although he looked at his watch and found that, indeed, he was late. „I'm starting in a minute."

In the other towns, the messengers must have been more punctual. He cast a last glance at the steady bustle of the people in the square, then he withdrew with a slight tug at his heartstrings and climbed the stairs. He had prepared everything withing the dead time of the town in order to rediscover the installation in his living time, although he had stopped thinking of that. The sight of the lit square was still lingering before his eyes and he no longer felt the joy with which he had received, several days ago, the news that he was to take part in a rescue operation. As a matter of fact, his naive joy had left him gradually ever since he had started walking through the strangely familiar vitriolstricken facades.

In the dim light emitted by the square through the windows he made out, on having reached the upper floor, the walls covered by the succession of paintings. The shapes of statues grew gloomingly out of the floor. There was enough light for him to find his way, so that he made for the window in the corner with no hesitation. Behind the curtain he found the head of the transmitter. The reception coordinates had been decided upon and he only had to move about the shiny funnel so as to scan each object.

Absent-minded, he pressed the button. The large painting vanished into thin air, its golden frame and all. He then pressed the white button, took two steps, triggered it again. The distorted bronze shape got volatilized. Being used to the rescuing operation, he didn't even try to imagine the swift flight of the disintegrated piece and its materialization in the identical hall, already reconstructed in the park of dead civilizations, in the very heart of Telmadon. Passing by the works of art, he stealthily at the flurry in the bright square, which was sending out to with uneasiness the moment they would be scattered and the silence foreshadowing the other silence, which was to last for ever. But nobody seemed to hurry that summer night, he could see new couples ceaselessly turning up in the square, while the vehicles kept driving round the rider, appearing and disappearing according to some unknown laws.

He advanced through the dark, methodically emptying each hall. Behind him, the walls that had been laid bare seemed to be pierced by numberless blank window and the space got amplified. He had got into a circular room and was directing the funnel towards the sole marble man that was standing in the middle, like a poor substitute for eternity, when a door opened suddenly and he was blinded by a flood of light falling from the ceiling.

A frightened girl. She was saying something and had held out her arm to him so that he could see her trembling fingers. He silently thanked those that had decided to have the members of the emergency teams near the clothes specific to the epoch, wherein they were to carry out their mission and he raised the tiny interpreter's capsule in his breast pocket.

„....here, at this time?" he then heard the last words of the girl's worried question.

„Good evening," he said quietly, bowing to her as he had seen men used to do in the old films shown in the Telmadon lecture room. „What a marvellous night!"

„But the museum was closed three hours ago... If you wanted to enjoy the night, you'd better have gone to the square."

„You don't see my point," he said. This night is marvellous because I'm here surrounded by works of art... and by a live miracle too."

„Listen," she said (but the fear in her eyes had been replaced by a gay sparkle and her voice no longer sounded as stern as I would have liked it to), „the time is quite improper for... I thought you were a thief."

„I hope you don't take me for one any longer," he said smilingly, feeling happy he hadn't managed to empty the room he had just entered.

„It's rather strange..."

„My admiring the works of art, you mean? I'll tell you a secret. After all, I think I prefer the live ones."

She smiled at last, in answer to his tormented

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smile. And how familiar everything seemed to him!

„Well, you nightly admirer, you're going to leave this place at once, in my company."

„You don't say so! Tell me, are all girls that unexpectedly turn up at night as strict as you are?"

„That beats all" she said, laughing. „Do you really imagine that I have to explain to you why I'm here?"

„Why not? I might have been sent to check things... To see whether the alarm systems work or not."

„Do they?" she said worriedly.

„Well, they don't. What do you think about it?"

„I simply don't believe it," whispered the girl.

She suddenly grew frail and her pale face belied her words, but her eyes had dilated and Stel drove away the thought that the following day, in some hours...

„I'll stage a demonstration for you," he said.

He pointed the transmitter's head at the statue in the middle of the room and pressed the button. The girl's scream was concomitant with the disappearance of the marble man, who had looked so stately a moment before.

„Well... what's going on?"

„What I' ve just told you," Stel said trying hard not to change the tone of his voice. „Have you heard the alarm signal?"

„What about the statue?" she shouted. „Where...?"

Ah, and he who had thought himself so very smart when he mentioned to her the alarm system he had disassembled the moment he had installed the transmitter!

„Calm down!" he said as convincingly as he could. „Haven't you heard about the new technique of checking alarm systems?"

„No, I haven't and I don't care about it. either. Still, there is he statue problem. Where's the statue?"

„A frightened girl," he said taking his own time, as words failed him. „And how childish..."

He was taking terrible pains to invent something. As a matter of fact he needn't have stayed there any longer: the art collection of the museum had been sheltered, his mission was over. All he still had to transmitter, but the mere gesture of pushing the needle on the time dial would mean killing the girl who had clung to his sleeve, and was hastily uttering the following words, in a broken voice.

„I won't let you go! Who are you?... Where's the Olympian?"

„Ah, the Olympian, he was alive once," he said, not having the slightest idea whom he was referring to, but feeling happy she offered him another opportunity of killing the time with words, as he knew he would be able to calm her down, only if he never stopped speaking to her, as one does with children or animals. „Do you worry about him? Silly girl... The Olympian is safe now, no thief can reach him now any longer. He's as stately as he used to and he's wondering why we don't mend the alarm system... which is out of order. And that is too bad. An alarm system should ring all its bells, shouldn't it?... Let's see ring again, we'll listen to them for a short while and then we'll go home, 'cause it's rather late and we have to go to sleep too, to fall asleep and dream..."

His voice broke. Everything would burn to ashes, including the dreams, and the girl beside him, who was staring at him now, asking in a whisper:

„Who are you?"

He took a deep breath and managed to smile a vague, dull smile, which contradicted all the laws of the Universe.

„I seem to heavy told you, several times..."

„No," she insisted, „stop it... I mean: who are you after all? What does all this mean?... See, I feel quiet now. Will you forgive me my fit a minute ago?"

„I'm the one to ask your pardon. I've frightened you."

„You did."

„I'm sorry. But you aren't frightened any more."

„Oh, no, I still am."

„You aren' t. The best proof is the fact we're talking like two friends... But I don't even know what your name is."

„Mare."

„Maria Maria Maria," he said. „Maria".

This joy and this sorrow too, a reunion and a loss... Why?

„I couldn't help thinking you were an ordinary thief."

„But you don't think so any longer."

„No. You're something worse, aren't you?"

„Maybe... I hope you won't consider me, however, a highwayman."

„No. Who are you?"

„I can't tell you. You're very beautiful."

Maria touched her own face with the palm of her hand. She was not prepared for it. Things had happened too abruptly and she had had to strain every nerve in order to face something that was not in her power.

„It only happened because I lagged behind in the library room," she whispered. I'm preparing to write a paper. In dreams and nightmares in the 18th century."

„Dreams and nightmares... Forgive me. I must have anticipated it."

„Why so?"

„I'll see you home."

They were talking under their breath, while looking at each other intently.

„O.K."

„On one condition."

At her wits'end, she, nevertheless, managed to ask, all in tears:

„Who's the one that imposes condition?"

„Me. Don't be surprised. And stop asking questions."

Maria heaved a sigh.

„Can't you at least tell me what your name is?"

„Stel."

„Stel," she repeated in a sad voice. „Switch off the light... Stel."

And they passed by the patch of light colour that marked off on the floor the place where the Olympian had stood several moments before, then they entered the first of the desert halls. Maria's lips were quivering. Stel folded her arms, his palm feeling the roundness of her shoulders, and the girl felt a lump in her throat. He no longer turned her head to look at the blank windows gaped in the damaged walls. His forehead slightly bent, his eyes closed, he was walking in like an automaton and never uttered a word, as long as they passed through the halls and started going downstairs. The night was dozing in his booth by the gate, as Stel had left him.

„Good night," whispered the girl, feeling his fingers pressing her shoulder, and the janitor gave a start.

„So late?" he asked, rubbing his eyes.

He was a nice old red-checked man, whose bald crown looked like a meadow in the midst of a silver hayfield.

„I'm late," Maria uttered in a strangled voice. „I've been working with the specialist from the Institute."

„Such a young couple! Why don't they spare their youth?"

And shrugging his shoulders, the old man took hold of the bunch of keys and opened the door for them.

„Good night," said Stel.

„See you tomorrow," said Maria, and her words painfully struck his chest.

When the gate was shut behind them, he couldn't help uttering in an irritated tone, while taking his arm off the girl's shoulder:

„See you tomorrow, that's what you said. Don't you know anything at all? Doesn't anybody suspect anything?"

„I feel I'm going mad," said Maria with a moan, raising her fists to her mouth. A hollow sound struggled in her throat for a moment like a little, helpless creature, ready to jump forth. „Why are you torturing me?"

„I'll never torture you..."

But she shuddered at the way in which he had uttered the words, more at their meaning. His face looked petrified.

„You've asked me to put no questions."

The square had got deserted in the meantime and the loneliness of the rider standing in the middle made it appear even more desolate. Monstrous cactuses were rising around.

„Nothing," he said, his eyes riveted on the petrified gallop, suddenly remembering how it was going to look the following day. Come on... Not that way!" he shouted when he saw her on the point of descending.

„I wouldn't have ever imagined that I would imperceptibly glide from the 18th century nightmares to the nightmare I'm experiencing right now," she said. „Because all this is but a nightmare... It's fake. You're not real. The museum is not empty, I'm at home and will wake up soon..."

„Wake up then!" Stel shouted again, turning her to him and kissing her on the lips.

She melted away in his arms. He should feel her breath touching his cheek, when she whispered:

„Don't wake me up! The nightmare is turning into a dream..."

Embracing each other, they drew near the rider covered by the deceitfull gold light of the bulbs and they started turning round it, walking on and on. Maria's head had stuck to Stel's breast. The girl was breathing smoothly, as it a dream. She did not feel like asking questions, she needed no answers, but he was aware that he was just stealing the minutes of a dead time, within which everything was barren and, overwhelmed by a deep melancholy and a great tender-ness, the let himself immersed in silence.

When Dim turned up beside him, he startled, but was not surprised.

„I'm sorry, Stel."

The short gun barrel was shining in the newcomer's hand.

„Who's he?" Maria said worriedly. „What's he saying?"

Stel strained her to his breast more tightly.

„Haven't you promised me not to ask questions? Speak out, Dim."

„Everything's happening for the second time. Stel, do you get it? It's the second time you're trying to save her. I mean the first time you even managed to do it. You flew together on *Acné* and you landed about 1000 years before... The leap in time was too big, and despite your training, it slipped your memory. How could you imagine you'd make it?"

„I haven't imagined a thing. I've simply acted like that... That's why everything seems so familiar to me!"

„So you still remembered all that?" the fellow said excitedly. „Everybody said it was impossible... But it was clear you were going to revisit the place, together with her. She's doomed to die, Stel. Nobody can change anything."

„The circle has closed in on us, hasn't it?"

„There's no other way out, you know it damn'well. You either part with her sight now, so that we might leave the place together, or..." the shiny barrel was pointed at her and Stel could see its dark hole.

„Why is she doomed to die, Dim? What would happen if she lived on with me?"

„She'd understand everything. She'd give the alarm. The alteration off history might exceed the permissible limit... You do know the law."

„I do," Stel said and his foot made a dash at Dim's hand, kicking off the gun.

The flaring flame struck the bronze steed, which turned into a chaos of nameless shapes. Maria gave a scream, but the two men had already started fighting and the shiny barrel, now pointing at the sky, then at the pavement, was jerking under the double pressure or Dim's and Stel's arms. Failing to understand what had been going on, ever since the library door had shut, she helplessly witnessed the clash of the two strangers who had talked to each other in a language she was totally ignorant of, and who were now rolling close to her. But one of the strangers had kissed her and her head had rested on his breast, in the twofold silence that made them feel more intimate than words could have ever done it. Getting scared she rushed to the steps of the museum, with the inarticulate thought of asking the old janitor, the only man she knew around, to lend her a helping hand. Hardly had she climbed the first steps, that the blaze gushing from the shiny barrel hit her straight and all that was left of the girl was her broken shadow, imprinted on the insensitive stone for good.

In the square, the two men broke loose from each other and were now picking themselves up, pantingly.

„There was no other way out," Dim uttered in a guilty voice.

Stel was looking at the patch that still preserved Maria's figure the shadow whose absence he had just prevented her from stepping across.

„No, there wasn't any," he repeated in a faint voice, that seemed to come from afar, then his fist dealt such an unexpected blow at Dim's chin that the latter couldn't avoid it and fell flat on the pavement.

Stel stood strained for a moment. No sound could be heard. Then he leant and picked up the gun out the loose and flabby hand; he rushed to the steps, without treading on Maria's shadow. On getting in front of the gate he touched the lock with the silvery barrel and closed his eyes when he pressed the trigger. The gate opened wide, black and swollen. He pushed it, dashed into the building passing by the stunned janitor's booth and he found his kitbag near the foot of one of the columns. Keeping it tight in his hand, he pushed lock the needle on the dial of time and found himself in the round hall on the upper floor.

„Maria Maria Maria," he said. „Maria!"

And he experienced again the joy and the sorrow, the feeling he was losing and regaining something, but no longer wondered what.

„I always thought you were an ordinary thief."

„But you don't think so any longer."

„No. You're something worse, aren't you?"

The very words. They had been uttered and could not be altered any longer, although things had become awful and his thoughts jostled against each other like some balls, now gathered, then scattered and then colliding again. Being unfamiliar with the leaps in time, be they of a short lapse, Maria failed to remember a thing and kept uttering the come to an end, but Stel knew there was little time left. He laid the kitbag down and, almost imperceptibly, he pushed the needle forward. The square had got deserted now and the loneliness in its middle made it see, even more desolate. Monstrous cactuses were rising around.

„Nothing," he said, looking at the petrified gallop, remembering the way it was going to look, not the following day this time, but soon, much too soon. „Come on... No, not that way!" he suddenly shouted, when he saw her on the point of descending.

There, to the left, a man's broken shadow was to be imprinted for ever. Not the janitor's shadow, as he had previously thought. He bit his lips. There certainly was a breach somewhere, the circle could not be let to close. He now had a gun on Jim and they know it. As long as he lived, Maria would also be alive.

„...but a nightmare... Everything's fake. You're nor real, the museum is not empty, I'm at home and will wake up soon..."

„Wake up then!" Stel said again, turning her to him and kissing her on the lips."

Translated by
RADU A.ŞERBAN

generaţia 90

PSYCHO 23

Motto:
God created the world in seven days.
People created His myth while [illegible] myth of people.

I look to Elisabeth how she lies there, near the wall, thinking it's pretty good for a standstill. Flexed feet under her, grazed knees, hands dangling besides her body full of blood, bending head an hair covering her face hiding those violet eyes which drive men crazy.

„That's that, Anthony", mumbles Alfred, the maestro, from his director's chair. „You can hang that ax between your feet and get loose." He sits there an puffs from an ever burning pipe, smoke all around him, thick and stinky like crematorium. „You need to put a little action in it", says he with a tough look. „You do it as if she wasn't a whore, as if you wouldn't hate her".

I throw the ax away and, once my hands free, I feel more idiot in front of meat pie Alfred. Behind the scenes some whores start laughing, hands covering their smiles.

„I'll try to put some more heart in it" I say to him, after taking a deep breath to calm my nerves.

„You better be", grunts Alfred. „Hopkins dear, I wouldn't like to ask for the services of Hackman or Al Pacino. I just want you to kill a woman in the most horrible way possible. That's all I want. You're not doing it properly. It seems you rather prefer to take her for a walk.

„Whores are laughing an I am feeling more idiot. Technicians mend her broken skull, organic plastic is added and skin regenerates in seconds. They wipe the blood from her face and change her T – shirt right in front of me. God, it's worth repeating the scene just to see that. Elisabeth rises and kisses my cheek.

„Don't look so disperately, darling. You really got to put some nerve in it."

•

It's 2 o'clock and I'm killing mosquitoes. They mutants, some bloody giant creatures, with a poisonous stingly proboscis. Venom with sadism overdose. I closely look at them, see those lenticular eyes, try to catch their fear when I crush them dead. They fly like ghosts and sting my skin with their disgusting sap. They make me far more angry than my part asks me to be. Alfred laughs clapping his knees. Whores keep him company. It is do hot they took out all their clothes and left only their panties on. One could hardly work with such an hallucinating image.

„That's it, Anthony. It works."

I am sick and tired of all this indications. I which I could see a bomb under that fuckin'chair of his, on which the letters are so big any idiot could read: HITCHCOCK.

„You gotta think that reality is tougher than fantasy. That's why you have to improvise something even stinker than that Goddamn Script. Even stinker then I'm askin' from you."

„Let's do it". Anne laughs grasping my hand but seeking Alfred with her eyes.

„Don't you dare kidding it, Parilliaud. First Hopkins must throw you onto stakes then chop your head off, arms and legs, so it won't be like heaven. After that we'll have to work a lot to put yourself back together."

„Big deal." Anne is caressing my arm and she does that in such a subtile way that feels like I'd have her in my bed. The answer is flat and with precise hint. It was I who brought her from her Gaelic crib especially for this part. In a way she owes me that. Maybe that is why she smiles so sweet to me.

Radu GAVRILESCU

Petrică Sîrbu

Born: 1960, October the 13-th
Civil Status: married- with a beautiful lady and having a gorgeous 5 y.o. girl
Profession: technician
Debut: in 1992 in "Anticipaţia" review with a story written together with Stefan GHIDOVEANU
Literary Status: former member of "Jules Verne" (Piteşti) SF club and member of ACFSF "Quo Vadis?" since 193
Literary History: stories published in "Jurnalul SF" and "Anticipaţia" reviews and "Anticipaţia" almanac; six awards won at different SF contests
Literary intentions: to do (much better)

generaţia 90

„You're allowed to a drop of booze before that, Hopkins." The maestro hands me a bottle with something yellowish in it. I take a sip and presently the alcohol strikes my veins. I keep drinking till my pity for this beautiful girl is beaten.

„Harasho, son."

•

I am rolling down 22 steps. Pain pierces my entrails. Mae waits for me, knife in her hand, hate and tension scatter her face. She thrusts the steel blade into my abdomen and wrings it inside the wound. She just stares at my while I am falling. In passing, I knock my head on the balustrade, then lay down at her feet and take care not to close my eyes. That happens only in stupid movies, people close their eyes when dying.

„Die, you creep."

Good god, why did she have to say that?

„Stop", the maestro screams, lifting up his big ass from the bearing chair. „Where exactly did you find that in the fuckin'script?" Mae West is almost crying.

„It was a trick, Alfred, just a small trick."

You can't image what it can get of his goiter of his when he's angry. His face is red and eyes half of the orbits. The hot water flows on top of my head following the shape of my body then drains off the canal. The technicians did a nice job, it simply disappeared without a trace. I look carefully over my abdomen and stretch my skin with the fingers. Nothing is visible, nothing at all.

„Can I get in too?"

Julia. Julia Roberts. She haunts the studios searching for a role. I suddenly decide to talk to Alfred about that. I would offer her my own part, if only she would be punching me with her breasts forever, just like she's doing now. Julia sticks by me and I can feel her body even through cold water.

•

Heavy cyber.Decibels, grunts, garbage.

Alfred is really enjoying himself with two chicks on his large things. He blows me a kiss, then fondles the women beside him. They laugh and lick his cheeks. I bow out. My car is waiting but as soon as they see me some hysterical women start to scream and dash around it.

„Good luck, Hopkins", puffs alfred leaned against the studio door. „And I'll be damned if I won't cut my dick off just to be in your place.

„He got his own fans though, the women around him letting him know that they would gladly go to bed with him, just for pure fantasy. They are crazy or drugged. They also look terrible, with dirty faces, gruesome haircuts and all sorts of metal things pinned on their noses, lips and God knows where else. My car manages to avoid the ruins and the women who keep beating ti the car windows and makes way through a dirty, urinous rain.

Year 17 after the Holocaust. Jesus did not come down for the second time to see the human misery. He is somewhere in a parallel Universe. Maybe he is showing to the disciples or the Holy Father for how long man can endure sufferance. Meantime, men and women lost their faith. They look for the forged reality on organic screens. We offer a palliative in the hope to convince then evil can be even more grotesque. To make them live.

Behind the car, beams of light appear on the walls, broken lines which slowly make up the letters of PSYCHO 23. People are screaming louder and gather on the streets staring at the wall.

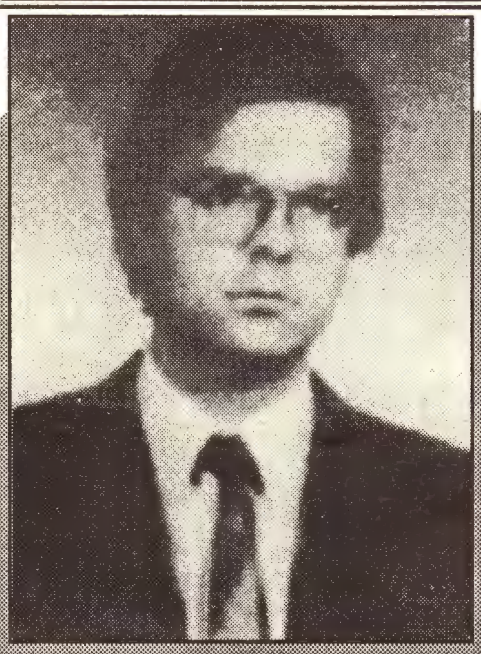
„Shall I get with the car under the main titles?" Mansell asks with a smile, eyes on the steel balustrade.

„Do it, Nigel" I answer roughly. After all, it doesn't matter anymore. Mansell races the car, unplugs the security system and we roll down into a terrible explosion, through fragments of steel, debris and dust. I can see my own skin shrivelling to the fire. „PSYCHO-23" is written above us in bas-relief, in burning letters, through the black curtain of smoke. Mansell is motionless getting out of his chest.

„That was great, Hopkins, wasn't it? Just look at them."

Yes. He is wright. People are happy. They like it.

Translated by
Roxana POPOVICI



LOSER

Born: 1958, August 13-th
Civil Status: (still) single- statement given under no pressure at 1994.05.18, 1900 hours C.E.T.
Profession: engineer; also editor of "Science Fiction FM"- a weekly one hour broadcast at Radio Prahova (Ploiești- FM dial)- since 1993
Debut: in 1981 in "Știință și tehnică" review with a short-short story
Literary Status: former member of "Solaris" (București) and "Jules Verne" (Ploiești) SF clubs and member of ACFSF "Quo Vadis?" (Ploiești) since 1993
Literary History: stories in 3 anthologies, in "Anticipația" almanac and in "Jurnalul SF" review; several award since 1981 at some national contests
Literary Intentions: heaps- but for the moment there are some other priorities

A sudden slap in my face. The force of the cuff chucks my back down. Two flappers grip me by the collar and I'm pulled high up.

„You, wretch!" someone whistles. „Will you make us more stink with your filthy presence?

Some knees hitting me below my paunch simultaneously with the blow with the buffet straight into my chin. I fall heavily bending in pain. I feel the blood bitter taste from my lower lip. And the dust taste. And the pain one. And the lowliness one. The fire clutch of a shoe into my kidney, then into my ribs. My eyes grow hazy. I wee a cop curiously watching the scene. He doesn't even take the trouble to check me up, he knows me damn well. The boss gets around, I see his white, spotless, quality pants.

„D'you gonna play today?"

I shrug, as much as someone can shrug trodden underfoot by his beasts down to the street dirt.

„D'you have money?"

I keep mum. Some nervous peg is passionately kicking me.

„Speak out, you turd! Don't you know who you have down on you?"

The boss propiatoryly butt in.

„Let him be. That will do. Suppose he steps into the level of men."

„This guy?" somebody wonders.

„Here. Today I pay the fiddler. I got yesterday one „W1" he plays the indifferent, chucking me one penny.

I yellowy turn my head. I stretch out to seize the penny. The sole of some shoe crushes my fingers. I howl uncontrolling myself. Some laughter.

„Come on, let him alone. Now it's his penny."

I take it and I hardly raise my body wiping the blood from my mug with the sleeve of the jacket.

The automatic machine lies at the end of that stinking blind alley, high-flown named the 132-nd Street, somewhere through the muck of the 43-th Square. It's a third class automatic machine, the cheapest, without winners of superior class like W2 or W1. As for the zero class, not an earthly! You could at best get one W3 ticket of 30 days availability. What means the ideal for my status. A whole month of cakes and ale.

In the same area it's the whites quarter. A bank like any other. Ready to cavil about us, wretch losers, no matter when. In fact. I was ready to get my sound licking. And I got it. I haven't think the boss had got a W1 ticket. It wasn't his style. He boasted of it, or maybe he had bought it, though it's utterly forbidden. But sometimes it was used, I knew it.

I stumble in front of the automatic machine. I feel other's piercing eyes. I stare at my hand. It shudders. I sadly smile, as much as my blubbered lips allow my smiling. Have I any chance? Heaps, the machine posters ensure me. I put the penny into it and I pull the handle. One can hear a tuneful thinking of electronics and the carton falls down into the glasslike box. I take it hasty and I turn it. The letter „L" reigns over, big and sneeringly. L is for loser. The world which marked me downright all along, loser. I'm off meekly, slowly, down to the band which had watched me carefully. I know what one is going to carry on.

•••

The FORTUNE system had been established relatively since a little while, shortly before all my born days. The system was, as sure as death, unerring, fair and progressively. Into a over-crowded world there are many people well grounded. So, in those times, how can the leaders be picked up? So it came to the most simple solution. The lucky ones. The ones who can win the harshly business actions all at once. It sprang up the F automatic machine network which gave, for a poor amount, the mean winner, good luck. W7 available for one hour, equivalent to ten machine tickets, W6 available for 6 hours, W5 and so on, as far as the upper classes 2, 1 and 0 available for 6, 12 and respectively 50 month. Including all additional real advantages: residences, cars, women, well-off jobs. As for me, I never got more then W6 in a couple of tens years.

•••

In the park is cold and dark. Though I'd snooze on some bench if I only could. But swarm like hell and my new memories about my date with the whites' band don't make me happy at the mere thought of some other pastime like that. In fact, the losers have no rights at all. They are human wrecks, tolerated wretches out of society's pity. They get grub, loathsome one, but grub and the filthy does for night. Nothing for the day. Iet

Cătălin IONESCU

them toil. Everybody needs wharfies and dustmen.

I've come tot the female area. I view Lola all at once.

„Lola" I sing out, somewhat unconvinced.

She sees me. She makes a wry face but the doesn't move away.

„Did you get anything for today?" she asks me disdainfully.

„What about you?" I retort daringly.

She replays rocking: „W5".

It doesn't hold water. One lucky ticket for a whole day. The jade thumps, it goes without saying. In this case the would've been already busy.

„And you?"

„Me, too."

She stares at me, astonished.

„Show it to me!"

I search for it into my pocket for the form's sake.

„You, fibber! I knew it! You haven't it! You're just a wretch loser!"

I cut up rusty.

„Look who's speaking! You, coarse-flossy! You have one W5 in the way I'm the president of „United Motors'!"

She smiles scornfully and she rummages in her handbag.

„Here!"

One cop has got around at unawares.

„D'you get into some trouble ma'am? Some kind of loser?" he asks pointing me out with his cudgel.

„Yeah, but let him go to hell! He is just a poor devil, too poor to set about me!"

She squeeze out one penny and she chucks it down to my props.

„Take it and fuck off!"

I bend, I pick up it and then I stump my chalks hastily. The copper has stared upon me not quite graciously. Yet I succeed in hearing a bit of that.

„You know, ma'am, in a half of hour I'll come out of my shift and perhaps you won't mind having dinner together..."

I gob in fury. The bitch! She really gets her W5. I gaze at my penny. I have an obvious impression that I doesn't get quite a lotto luck this evening. The automatic machine is a few steps away. Would I try it? Why not? And after all, when did I get myself fortunate? I put into it the penny and I pull the handle. Some tuneful thinking of electronics and the tiny carton falls down into its box. I take it, I turn it and then I shy it nettledly into the next dust bin, brimful of waste tickets printed with a „L" letter, big and scornfully. God of fortune makes no mistakes.

•••

The FORTUNE system was built upon the advanced basis of statistical and probabilistical mathematics. That makers congratulated themselves with the designing of an ultimate aleatory electronic device which it has to be it, beyond any doubt, since it was officially adopted by Government as elite choice method. Nobody touches fortunate people. For their luck means the welfare of the others. More fortunately they are, more we roll in wealth. As a matter of fact our position didn't get quite better, but they're getting along better and better. Cops are at least W5 and the whites' bands, which set about not only negros, who are some unlucky fellows as hell, but also us, the losers. The bands don't allow inside them less then W5. They're a heavy weight! Don't know how they tramp it solledly at least six monthes a year trembling waiting for the daily allowed penny, on the chance of one big and nice „W" printed ticket?

•••

Casually I see Jenny. She walks scared, with some rumpled dress with the skirt and the breast piece teared up. She recognizes me and the stops hesitating. Something strikes to me: if she's smashed up also, very likely, that means this evening I'm lucky. If I'd have one penny, I'd game it and I'd win it. I nigh out. Whence one penny?

„You're down, Jenny?" I say to her instead of hi.

She drops her eyes.

„Is it something wrong?" I insisted.

„Somebody've raped me" she whispers.

Almost I burst out laughing. According to my few information (primary school is for all children, secondary and higher are only for the lucky at least W3), to rape is to do her the thingummy, minus her permission. But in Jenny's case it would be astonishingly hat she might object to it. Well, that's her own lay-out.

„And what are you at?"

„Trifle. I go dosshouse to turn in."

I screw my nose. I've got the losers" dosshouse up to my throat.

„Don't you wanna stay with me?"

„Where?"

„Here. In the park."

„They'll catch us on the hop!"

„Maybe not. Night is coolly and cops made them more easy. And besides, that's our lucky evening. We've come across each other, haven't we?"

She smiles a little. I try.

„D'you have one penny?"

She has a good laugh.

„You, ass! If I'd have had it, would I've been here near you?"

She hugs me, kissing for long. Thru her light dress I can feel her not and roaring vital body. The grass is near by, just for make love in the dark.

•••

Lots of dreams of mine had been people by luck draw visions. It goes without saying that I'm used to dream tickets got from the automatic machines, tickets much like W4, 3, 2, or even 1. One W4 would take me out from morass. I wonder if theorists were right. When you're lucky, this is the lucky chance, if you aren't, this isn't it. So simple. There are statistically based stated periods, all kind of fortunate horoscopes and no end of things. Heaps of crap! I've never got luck. Beyond any doubt I'm a wreck, a riff-raff, with cop's wide straps walloped daily and kept in any food. Even here there's an automatic machine on which we have the right to play weekly. So strangely, sometimes there are

winners! Maybe I'll be one of them, someday. But at this time of day I like better to stay into the cell and let my mind loose. After all, everything was caused by Jenny. Where could she be by now? I correct myself. Not where, but with whom?

***

I lay down on my back in the soft grass. Jenny huddles her up, unawares.

„D'you feel cold?"

„I feel very fit" she says, hugging me in her style, simply rolling her up round about me.

„You, my love" she whispers much later. „What d'you do?"

„Next to nothing. I try to sleep."

„Listen to me carefully. I have a number one idea."

„Really?" I yawn.

„Yeah, sure, a capital idea. You know, I was thinking at something I read once in some book."

„Some book?" I jump out of my skin. Whence have you a book? Only lucky guys W1 and W0 have the right to read books!"

„Well, I found one lost one."

„You walked the line" I say with indignation.

„Do tell, big deal! Don't we do it again, now and here?"

I shake my head, hesitatingly. That's not quite so. It's one thing to sleep in the park with some dame for the likes of you and it's another one to stretch out for the big guns' advantages. You don't play on that.

„So?"

„So one wrote that fortune is man made."

„That's a lot of baloney" I sniff. „How can it be man made?"

„Well, somehow."

„You, fool. You see by yourself that a book isn't for you. Who knows what was really written there and look what you got yourself that fortune could be man made."

„How in the world?"

„So simple. You go and break an automatic machine.

I become stunned. To break an automatic machine? I'd get twenty years of jug. At best. Jenny's mad.

„You, fool! You got nothing of it. If you succeed in breaking it before the cops' coming, you come upon the lucky tickets. And no cop will ever touch a W2 owner."

Flabbergasted, I begin to scratch my nob. She's right. So simple. You break the automatic machine and when the police is coming you shaw them the winning ticket. The tickets are printed with a special ink and kept in sealed vacuum sections. In touch with the air the ink wipes itself after the ticket availability time, making it worthless after its utilization legal term.

The idea! Like blazes!

„Jenny, you're tremendous!"

She smiles delighted. She comes above me and the kisses me. My mind files back at this amazing idea to break an automatic machine. It could work. It will, beyond doubt. I move her away slowly.

„No more of that! let us be gone, now!"

„Where?" she says puzzled.

Gabriel BALAZS

„On the 79-th Street, a few steps away, it's a first class automatic machine, more retired."

„At this time of night?"

„What time could be?"

„About one or two hundred hours. What about tools?"

„I can get them. I've a friend who is night watchman at some garage. I borrow in a crack, it's near by."

„Right, come along!"

We lift and trim ourselves up, then we scamper away.

I get waveringly near the automatic machine. I peer all around, no one. Jenny's at the next corner, being on the look out. If somebody comes, she whistles. I come to it. I know which side can open, once I attended its loading with the sealed tickets sections.

A cold shiver goes down my back. I shake my nob. Dash it all, can't I break a machine? Of course, if I open it, police will alert, but will the cops get here, the tickets are in my pocket.

I take the screwdriver and shove it by the side of the small back door. The toil has just begun.

It's a hard work, even with the chisel and the hammer.

I'm all dripping with perspiration. I mop my forehead out of sweat and then I carry on.

The alarm starts all of a sudden. Another cold shiver goes down my back. I would get up and take to my heels. I glance around. Jenny's flicks out of sight. The coward! I remain. I'm about it.

The door yields to the last effort. I got it! Here are the tickets sealed tubes. My eyes shine. No problem! Tickets drawing out device is sophisticated but fragile.

Police siren is heard from somewhere near by. The fortune is almost here, I can feel it. I hit the first tube with the chisel and the hammer. The tickets scatter round me, not so many. All of them with „L" letter. That's trifle.

Police siren is closer to me. Other tube. Same „L" letter. The siren more loudly. Other tube. And another one. And another. I feel my cold shiver going down my back, colder. I see the police cars head lights at the end of the street. The last tube. Broken.

I become stuff suddenly, feeling me dead to the world. All tickets are „L" out down. L is for loser. The one who loses. That's me. A great weariness overpower me, a huge one, I'd like to sleep and to dream nothing, nothing at all.

I don't even feel the cops' paws snatching me and pushing me into the black van.

I still get the time to see the automatic machine with its bent and broken door and the great number of tickets spread all over creation with their small printed „L". White and careless tickets scattered in some broad „L" letter on the dark sidewalk, one „L" showing me its scornful jaw.

I'm got in the van and the door is slammed behind me.

Translated by Cătălin IONESCU

Ovidiu BUFNILĂ

(born: 15.08. 1957; Tg.Ocna, Bacău)

Faculty of Siderurgy. Double debut: "The solar clock", in PARADOX, and "Machines moving", in LUCEAFĂRUL.

Creates a literary workshop (UNIVERS),in 1981 in Bistriţa. Creates another literary workshop in 1982 (451 F); it will change it's name in Sandclock, because of political reasons. He published in almanacs, magazines, fanzins. Received the ROMCON prize for his novel, "Jazzonia", in 1993.

Married. No kids.

Actually: press officer at the Bacău Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

SOMETHING ABOUT WORN OUT SUBJECT THAT IS STILL CAUSING GREAT BOTHER TO THE PEOPLE

During the famous battle given on GOMELA our ship was turned to dust by a violent explosion.

A silence.

Then, nice to be heard, a tango.

The COLONEL, a super-robot, keeps computing my parameters, every hour.

I'm floating in the middle of a sphere, where my irradiated body tries to survive.

Now and then, the COLONEL marches past of me, at my orders, in front of the sphere.

The right measured step represents a reason for being proud of oneself even for a COLONEL.

At the end of it, through an auxiliary pipe, I can send him a medal that I manufactured myself from the pages of a thriller whose story I know by heart.

The COLONEL attaches what medal to his uniform, heart-wards and signs:

"La solitude n'existe pas."

Translated by
Mihaela BUFNILĂ

Daily Hunger

The Sun had turned to dust over the sea. The swimmers' happy shouts were reaching the high sea-walls.

Bek was having a snooze, his head leaned upon the back of a chair, inside his newspapers kiosk. He was dreaming about an UFO stopped above the head and about someone inside of it, that shown a special interest in his newspapers and magazine.

He also should be more interested in that. No one can live without information, today" grumbled Bek and then woke up.

There was an UFO parked right above his newspapers kiosk.

What do you want? shouted Bek, full of excitement. I have news from all over the world. First brain transplant, first people on VENUS, first tour of the French Balley-"

He got no answer from the UFO. Surprised, Bek glazed at the machine, then he grew angry:

"You know something?! If you don't have the slightest intention to buy one of my newspapers, you'd better go away! I'm not so found of UFO, that's it!"

There was a violent whistling all of a sudden, then a strange power sucked in all the pictures and the words printed on Bek's newspapers. Then, smoothly, without any possible noise, the UFO vanished somewhere into the heavenly vault.

Scared by this turn of the events, as he has never been before, Bek at the sky, fearfully, then, absentminded, he built a plane out of a white page of his newspapers and threw it through the empty air.

The plane had a minute of hesitation, then, it also vanished into the heavenly vault.

translated by
Mihaela BUFNILĂ

Sebastian A. CORN

(26.03.1960 - BUCUREST!)

C.A.Rosetti high school - english section. The Faculty of Medicine. Actually: thoracic surgeon. Meantime: ship surgeon (in 1989). As a kid: studied one year at the American International School in Conakry, Guinea.

However, if you are in desperate need for an operation (I wish you were not!) don't look for dr. Sebastian A. Corn. That's not his real name.

Writes since he was 11. Writes science fiction since 1992, after reading Herbert Franke's "Glass cage" and C.T. Popescu's "Cassargoz"

Smashing debut at the end of 1993: Ist prize "Quo vadis?"; IIIrd prize "Nemira", six nominees "Nemira", a "Helion" nomination, "Dan Merisca" prize; IInd "Segra" prize.

Loves: Clifford Simak, Frank Herbert, William Gibson, Ph. K. Dick, Michael Haulica, Danut Ivanescu, C.T. Popescu. Listens to: Bob Dylan, U2, Sting. Looks at movies by: Ridley Scott, Ridley Scott, Ridley Scott. Can't stand: hypocrisy, stupidity, intolerance.

Defining his prose: one - the world exists only in our intellect, that's why we are not able to fully communicate; ergo , two - taking this into account, they can manipulate us

Regrets: why doesn't everybody read science fiction?

Biggest achievement: surviving.

BLITZ

eve. an overdriven eve, he decided, as he watched her walk on the street's concrete, hailing a minibus. 21.00. snackbars, shining night clubs, the illuminated crossing, halogen street lamps reflected on her long jacket & on her tall boots. hand made leather. a hypergearing eve.

with an boreal look?

a bunch of passengers poured through the opened doors of the minibus on the muddy street. he got off the sidewalk, right behind her, when, suddenly, the woman in leather clothes twisted around peering at him. the hems of her jacket spread apart. enough for him to take a glimpse at her

don't. don't follow me - suggested her shiny glance. electric steel. don't follow me. the mud sprinkled on her boots by the passengers leaked like ashes down her calves.

eve's bones, tendons and joints ground as she got on the minibus. after her! the crush inside and the AEROSMITH sounds mixed with draughts of orange light filtered by the steamy windows. her electric steel which summed up the black boots, the long leather jacket, the gleaming stockings, but, mostly, mostly , her overdriven frame. skeleton, ligaments,muscles. a lubricated arctic light.

start. speeding up among cars, perforating the compact blocks of light that sprang out of the shop windows directly on her siliconated skin. they dashed among the lorries and rumbling tramways while king ferdinand boulevard got narrower and narrower, tightening as the city skated aside dissolving in a pool of luxes.

you shouldn't've followed me. it's not a lucky minibus - oh! I'm sure it was a lucky one! she was definitely wrong! this was a lucky minibus. 5 minutes of inherent optic sex. a contradiction, isn't it? an opposition, isn't it? contraria currantur, isn't it? - take a look at the others. he looked at them. frozen. and eve was also freezing while the minibus vibrated filtering itself through the automobiles, kerbs and concrete poles.

we are doing it on a contract basis. and you? and you? - hyperangrenated eve buzzed like a trawl of piano chords on the point of snapping. now, she was definitely right. he didn't have any contract, any contract at all. only with eve, perhaps. on a temporary basis.

but eve was freezing, according to her own contract, flattening like a mourning stiffened jelly. flash! contract for two dimensions. the town expanded area-like. flash! stasis in a hyperrealist picture. ready to be framed. ready to be delivered in the collector's flat which they, alive & bidimensional, will spy on a long term basis. from a hyperrealist picture. for their beneficiaries.

awful? disgusting? hopeless? not at all! not at all! in fact, he could start a new life with that overdriven eve. spying. watching. and engendering the photograph with our breed. bidimensional kids in a flat future.

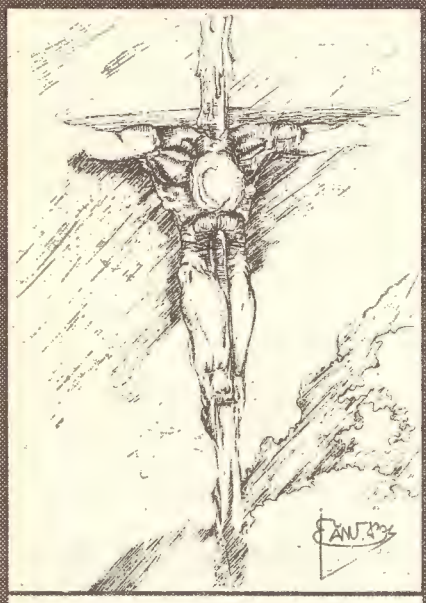
flash!

Translated by Sebastian A. Corn

Ionuţ BĂNUŢĂ

To Petrica Sirbu, joyfully for his existence

generaţia 90



Ionuţ BĂNUŢĂ

Madia Mangalena's face fills the whole screen. The bluish filter enlightens her discretely retouched eyes. On sub-wave, they broadcast the prophecy of Brodar's coming. It sticks on the walkers' brains, penetrates them, strikes roots and finally, takes the appearance of Madia of Mangala. You don't need a screen anymore, her image has already impregnated the cortexes; it waves like a wolf-flag, the only difference being that it doesn't howl. Madia smiles. The marks of the stones are clear on her face - the story of her life.

"Let the immaculate one throw first."

And everyone crushed in to throw the stone, seeking to be seen how they throw it, wishing to get recognition of their being clean.

The surgical liftings smoothed her body, made it shiny, magnetic. The clothes stick on her silhouette, eyes, hands and everything else around stick on her sillhouette. She walks on the street and the clocks fall apart around her, break into pieces, then freeze. Madia without time. Magnetic Dia.

Only her face remains bitten by the stones. To recall. And each caress burns one of the hands that held the stone, each kiss has the taste of the stones.

"What... What the hell's that?"

Everyone jumps aside at the very first touch. Burned, shocked, disgusted, terrorized, throwing up. They swear not to touch her ever again, but the next day they star it all over. They keep themselves busy in her way, seeking to be seen by her, to be chosen, at least, to be noticed. Ferocious males, men who rule the destinies of the world. The rags she polishes the furniture with. The cream she polishes her shoes with. The boots she wears.

"Linda, Linda where are your boots?" (lovesong from the twentieth century)

The toothbrushes she cleans her tooth with, the purse she wears, the tampax she places between...

Madia Mangalena, the psalliote of Mangala. Beautiful, dreadfully beautiful. When she makes love, her movements avoid and receive, feint, watch, beg, urge, howl. She turns into syrup or brandy, worms herself inside you and starts playing the fool in there. She burns you, she tears you.

But you'd rather burn than rust. First lesson.

With her body she burns you, burning at her turn, consuming herself to ashes into you. Madia of Mangala, living her death everyday.

"A whore! Every jerk spitted her, every cock-sucker that walks her around like the saint relics, has already spread large her legs apart! A whore!"

And yet, people gather around screens, just as in the mad years of Psycho programmes. 23, 24... 26: Andie McDowell sold en detail for the sandwiches of the handicapped (IQ under 160). These were really good times! Movies - they called it. Now, on the screen, we see nothing but the immediate reality. The tricksters, the handlers of lifes, they all bomb us with the wholly lifes of the saints. I don't know where from they pulled out such a great deal of saints. It really stinks to me.

But, as long as we don't make anything out of it, we'd better stay at home on our butts and give up the diems. Anyway, the dreams-maker shouldn't be within anyone's reach.

Patina is another name for rust. It ennobles it. Second lesson.

For the moment being, let's wait for that Brodar, let's see what's up with him. Maybe, he's just another Big Brother, like all the others who walked their butts around here. They've all deserted us, leaving as soon as they've arrived down here. Some wretches! Some caddishes!

And us, the cattle, we leave innocently our lifes in their palms, palms not even good enough for a masturbation. But we belong to them. And they've already forgiven Madia, the she-one we could never forgive. But how could we forgive her, she is our whore, isn't she? Aren't we locking ourselves with her in 2/2 fuckchinettes, aren't we throwing away our clothes and socks and wristwatches to gain another ten more square centimeters of skin for caresses? How could we forgive her since she made us throw all those stones? No executioner forgives his victims.

"Let the immaculate one throw first."

The marks of the stones on her face make her even more beautiful. Any man that sees her, feels in the nostrils, at once, the smell of her blood. Her call.

On the huge screen, Madia is moving away, and behind her remains the smell that drives me crazy. I feel the blood boiling in me to the top of the tops and the sensong blasts in the air around. The filters are drifting, they are red now. Masna Piya passes her dextra over the cords, the grave chords clear up and, from somewhere, from the deep depths, I know where from, the tides are rising.The master's image blurts away - remains the tide and the sensong. Trembling at the beginning, more and more agitated afterwards, finally aggressive, the tide.

The passers-by look at me, astonished.

Beyond hate, love waits. Like a door, like a wound, like a spike.

I'm the only one who'd forgiven her. I love her.

I don't feel my hands anymore. They got numb. I never thought it could be so bad. Nay, they didn't get numb. They hurt so bad, as if they didn't belong to me. Especially, the spikes hurt me. The lust on their faces when they planted those spikes in my palms. Just like then. Their faces, disfigurated by hate.

From here, from up here, everything looks different. But, anyhow, it doesn't matter anymore.

A woman stopped in front of me. I look straight in her eyes and it seems to me that she is my mother. Probably, all moribunds feel that. Blood is dripping from my wounds, and she dashes aside, clearing away her basket. Too late. She looks at me and says:

"Is it you, or should we wait for another one?"

"It's me, all right. It's me."

Translated by

Mihai SAMOILĂ & Sebastian A. CORN

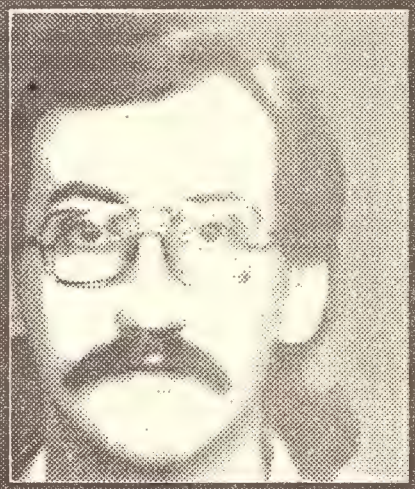
(born: 1.02.1955; Armăşeşti Vîlcea)

Probably, the oldest romanian cyberpunk. Tall, thin, half-bald. Doesn't seem to be the one that wrote his texts. Faculty of Mathematics. Actually: computerising (what else?) at the National Railroads Company, in lassy.

Writes science fiction since 1987. Winns a prize at Quasar Festival. His debut: in Jurnalul SF, # 8. Winns three prizes at te end of 1993: The Jurnalul SF prize, the IInd Helion prize, the Ist prize Brain. Eversince, he issues a short story weekly in the SF supplement SUPERNOVA, from lassy.

Married. Two kids.

Tenacious. Pathologically writing draft after draft on the same short story. Has some linguistic inventions: helpaş, zipaş, cipar, mufist, gofren, sensong. Shifts easily towards a lyric athmosphere, even when describing atrocious scenes. Able to compose elegies even on a cannibalic set up.



Michael HAULICĂ

Dănuț IVĂNESCU

Born: 1964, August the 8-th
Civil Status: single can one really believe this but having a beautiful 6 y.o. girl
Profession: engineer- but he's denying that it's by his fault
Debut: in 1990 in "Star Trafic" review with 3 short-short stories
Literary Status: former membrer of "Jules Verne" (Ploiești) SF club and member of A.C.F.S.F. "Quo Vadis?" (Ploiești) since 1992
Literary History: stories published in "Star Trafic", "Jurnalul SF" and "Anticipația" reviews; included in Nemira's anthology; several awards since 1992 won at some national contests
Literary Intentions: modest- to publish only 5 (unwritten yet) books till the end of the year.

Pour moi, avec reconnaissance et espoir

1. Le 3 Janvier 1995

Ce sale samedi, je suis triste... Comme tout autre quand il pleut d'ailleurs. Rien de nouveau au fait que les les angoisses ont la mauvaise habitude d'enfler à l'humidité, tout comme l'argile. Et puis, le reste. Le bruit permanent de l'ascenseur qui monte et descend à des intervalles irréguliers... Les etageres en fibres acriliques mal faconées qui vibrent doucement au passage de l'express... Une blatte qui court sur le mur... Les gouttes figées sur la fenêtre... On connait déja tout ca.

Le chemin de l'hôpital à la maison m'a fatigué un peu. Mais pas suffisamment... Les souvenirs des demiers mois, vifs encore ne me laissent pas tranquille. Un autre chapitre mal fini. Commencé par la défloration d'un juke-box „old Fashion" et quelques dents cassées au „Célibataire-en-chiffons", sur le boulevard Jablonski, à côté de Teleky. Fini dans le même brouillard qui pue la "prune" et le vitoplex brûlant, fini donc par une bagarre tout à fait démocratique entre quelques szekels „marche où creve" et une gang de „Jeunes Dawos", avec l'Etrangleur étalé en vif-argent sur les tee-shirts de petite série. Et avec Iza qui dominait la rixe dans l'éternelle robe de senzacier laminé, un maxi-long jusqu'au pieds, Iza comme un Baal féminin, né directemment de l'inox du comptoir.

– Fiche le camp, gosse! C'est malsain pour toi ici! me jeta-t-elle et les mots ont plané au dessus du vacarme jusqu'au dans le coin ou je traînais.

Et j'ai senti une brume rouge tomber goutte à goutte dans mes yeux... Et l'hurlement s'élanca brusquement, comme déclanché par un régulateur automatique.

– Gosse, ta mere! Andy! Moi, c'est Andy, bête putaine!

Elle a ri, la tête renversée... La rire-masque numéro 665... Oui, elle riait toujours aux moments délicats... Virgil, son frére aîné, disait que pendant 14 années ca ce ne c'était jamais répété.

– Laisse tomber, mon petit! Même mes chaussettes sont plus vieilles que toi. À peu près dix minutes plus vieilles, si tu comprends ce que je veux dire. Va plutôt et attends le printemps!

Au diable! Les phrases, même chucotées, sont arrivées clairement à mes oreilles. Hi-Fi! Le bon Dieu sait comment. Je n'étais pas étoné... pas le temps de m'étoner, au moins... Un gitan les levres désagréablement fleuris comme un oillet de chair et de sang m'a rompu les côtes. Et j'ai glissé dans un autre monde... Entre moi et les imbéciles qui se trouvaient dans le bar quelque chose s'est écoulé , comme un écran de verre... J'ai crié encore une fois „Non!" du fond de mes poumons et c'est fini... Kanet filma.

La vérite est qu'on ne pouvait pas vivre avec Iza... Je le savais très bien pour ma part... C'est comme une flame qu'elle brûlait... elle brillait, lointaine... On s'échaufait auprès d'elle... mais si on s'approchait d'elle... Plutôt non! C'était comme ca, Iza, la belle folle que j'aimais en secret.

2. Vlady: Tous les noms des groupes sont soit apologétiques soit idiots. (Il rit). Nous... Je ne sais pas comment t'expliquer... (Il se gratte les plis sur son front). Il s'agit d'une sorte de nousée... On sait déja tout ca... Plantes en plastique... Vêtements en plastique... et puis les tablettes ou l'on se tourne (il compté sur les doigts). Pour la bile... Pour les glandes... Pour l'acné... Pour la potence... Pas pour la sottise! Des pastilles qui te volent l'intelligence où te la rendent peut-être. Et cet ordre de fichier. Des gens classifiés sur numéros... Des têtes aussi... Les jours tranchés en portions... Tout est optimisé... Et élévé au rang de modele. Je vomis sur tout! Voilà un méssage, n'est ce pas? Si tu les veux absolument un. Où peut-être il n'y en a pas? (Il reforce la négation par un mouvement de la tête). Non, ce n'est pas un méssage! Je m'en fiche de vos messages!

Le reporter: – Oui, c'est un point de vue. Evidemment pastout c'est commode. Comment expliquez-vous, dans un tel contexte le succes du groupe? Parce que incontestablement, on parle beaucoup de vous demierement.

Vlady: – Diable le sait! (Il montre vers les téléspectateurs). C'est pas à moi de repondre, demande-les! Parce que nous les attaquons peut-être. Peut-être parce que nous mettons en jour quelque chose qui existe en chacun, et qu'ils n'ont pas le courage de le reconnaitre... Parce qu'ils sentent le besoin d'une renaissance peut-être. Mais pour ca il faut mourir... Et nous les aidons à le faire dans la salle, à chaque concert.

Le reporter: – Je comprends! Donc la thérapie „Guru Amoc" les intéresse. Pourquoi „Guru Amoc"?

Vlady: – Ah, ca pas besoin d'explications! Ecoute la musique et tu va comprendre!

Le reporter: – Parle m'en un peu!

Vlady: – Je ne sais pas! (Il leves son epaules). Qu'on l'appele ca psihotronique. Killergrunge... Acid-dream... Industrial-scream... Pas d'importance. Ecoute-la, c'est tout!

Le reporter: – Tu as raison. Les étiquettes sont pour les pots. Mais si tu n'avais pas joué qu'aurais-tu fait dans la vie?

Vlady: – Le trottoir, évidemment! Et peut-être aurais-je tué quelques mecs que je connais. Et que les autres connaissent aussi!

Le reporter: – Bon, heureusement tu chantes. Pourtant, comment est

THÉRAPIE DE CHOC AVEC DES EFFETS SECONDAIRES

né „Guru Amoc"?

Ezechil: – Vlady, je le connais depuis longtemps. Nous effrayions des vieillards et des femmes dans les express avec des bombes artisanales (il rit). C'était seulement de la fumée, mais les misérables en étaient tres éffrayés. Puis quand il a été hospitalisé par sa mere a la „La Fondation Marie" je me suis amusé dans les escadrons de Mashe Razovichi, les plus forts entre Teleky et Les Héros. Des gamins, que veux-tu! À l'âge de seize ans à peine nous avons commencé a jouer. Vlady avec „Epistaxis" et moi, avec „Enema". Nous n'en étions pas contents (une grimasse). Et puis donc dans ce printemps, avril où mai à peu près, un soir, après avoir cassé la gueule à des flics, tout pour l'amusement, bien sûr, les voilà quils nous rentrent dessus, en nous emmenant joliment au violon. Là-bas, je trouve Andy, repassé au tabac. Il était dans un de ces états! Les poulets avaient fait du bon travail. Le lendemain, „Guru Amoc" naquit. C'est tout. Ca suffit?

Le reporter: – Sûrement! Donc voila „Guru Amoc" qui naquit. Et maintenant? De quel côté?

Andy: – Mon vieux, ca suffit! (il prend le bras d'Ezechil): Fichons le camp! Nous avons de boulot a „Caliviotis" (il fait le geste connu du médius). Aujourd'hui c'est Eros que nous vénérons, pas Thanatos. Voila pour toi aussi... (il crache sur le micro).

Fragment de l'interview avec „Guru Amoc" difussé sur MTV 8

3. *Le 1 Mars 1995*

La vérité est limitative. Mais sur le mensonge on peut construire des structures théoriquement illimitées, souvent plus solides que les structures réeles... Et les labyrinthes néleiles te poussent vers des plaisirs (intellectuels, ésthétiques?), autrement tres difficile d'atteindre. La vérité? Une notion artificile suffisante a soi-meme... Une notion, instable, conditionnée... Le mensonge, le faux, le parjure, le kitsch, l'imposture, la tromperie, voila les nouvelles valeurs sociales qui t'évéillent toujour la pensée en erection. On connait déja tout ca...

Malheureusement je suis fatigué... Inévitablement, je pourrais dire... Ou peut-être me suis-je ennuyé simplement... Je ne sais pas. A quoi bon l'effort?... Je crois qu'il y a en toujours en moi le germe du doute. Et maintenant il fait son devoir. Autrement je ne m'explique pas... Pourquoi pas les autres... Mais, en effet, nous vivons trop pour avoir des sentiments stables. Aujourd'hui comme ca, demain d'une autre maniere. Oui, bien sûr, nous sommes fidèles a nous mêmes. Ce n'est que tres rarement que nous trahissons notre caractere. Non, ce n'est pas cet épisode malheureux qui m'a amené ici... Il n'en a pas été la cause... Pas du tout. Iza est seulement la goutte qui fait déborder le verre... Derière perturbation qui détruit l'équilibre... C'est tout. Rien de plus.

Si je pense bien, j'ai toujours attendu... Tous ces ans... Je ne pourrais dire quoi. Je me promenais dans les rues, le syndrome de la tente dans l'âme... Ayant la conviction que mon temps viendrait... Que le vie ne pourrait pas être seulement estropiée et misère... Et cette stérile attente a usé mes éspoirs. Plus efficiente que la répulsion... Que le désespoir. Oui, c'est la faute de l'attente.

Dans un tel état on commence à boire... on prends "de neige" et on fouille dans la salle de bain pour trouver les rasoirs... Mais j'ai connu tout ca... Depuis longtemps... En vain? Ce n'est pas ma faute. Un autre... Alors?

J'ai recu une goutte de misanthropie... pas trop...Un tout petit peu... C'est vrai que je ne me supporte pas moi même... Je dois m'accepter pourtant, bon gré-mal-gré, non? Être en accord avec soi-même, disait quelqu'un. Mais les autres... Personne ne peut m'y obliger.

Et un matin, il y a une semaine, la rage m'a réveillé. La rage pure, pas altérée par des justifications, dégagée du support... la rage en état initial. J'ai déménagé rue Armenien. Tout lieu est bon quand on n'a rien a quitter. Rien a perdre, a attendre... Non, je n'ai pas quitté la ville. Je ne le pourrais pas. Je ne connais pas d'autre chose. Il est vrai, j'ai des infos sur le reste. Mais c'est a peu près tout. La vie est ici, autour de moi, pas ailleurs, pas dans les journaux, pas a la télé. La guerre de l'Orient? Ca ne me dit rien.

Mais la bagarre qui a eu lieu au „Célibataire-en-chiffons"? Oui, c'est vraiment un événement! Qui m'a mené directement a l'hôpital. Les autres peuvent crever tranquilles dans le désert. C'est leur affaire.

Sylvia Kristel? Une photo... Insipide... Inodore... Iza c'est autre chose... Je la sais... Je sens son parfum aujourd'hui encore... Le goût... J'ai caressé ses seins fréles. Je lui connais les fureures... J'ai supporté souvent son regard plein de cette compréhension balcanique-ortodoxe des choses.

La Mafia? Les assassins payés? Jamais n'oublierai toute ma vie le ricanement de Drops quand il a écrasé sa cigarette dans ma poume. Ainsi... Pour s'amuser. Je n'avais pas encore dix ans. J'ai longtemps tremblé en entendant son nom. La nuit je mouillais les draps.

La paix europeene?... Des mots... Comment m'enthousiasmer sur quelques mots? Mais je sais me réjouir. J'ai pleuré quand la bande „Les Jeunes Dawos" de Iosif a crucifié le cretin avec une barre fichée dans le ventre sur le porte de „Max".

Des orpheiins somalais dévorés vif par des mouches? Que dire? C'est désagréable... Mais moi, combien de coups j'ai recu... Avec le cable du recorder... Avec le sceau pour l'ordure... Avec le sécheur des cheveux... Qui en sait? Parce que je suis resté trop a la télé... Parce que je n'ai pas mangé avec ethousiasme le bouillie de farine quotidien... Parce que je ne réussisais a comprendre pourquoi je devais dire „mère" a Helene et „pére" a Emmanuelle et pas l'inverse. Ehi Je veux pas m'en souvenir. C'était très bien en MicroTaz 1. Une zone centrale, n'est-ce pas? Il occupait en ce temps-la seulement un fauburg pilote avec 50000 habitants environ. Une sorte de bantustan. Le théorie de Teleky provoquait encore du dégout a plusieurs. Page trois: „L'education des enfants dans les couples mono-sexués ne peut-être que bénéfique". Hé - hé. La page seize: „L'absence des tensions entre les deux sexes, entre deux espéces on pourrait dire, élimine les tares psychiques qui se manifestent a partir de la puberté". Bla - bla - bla. Et ainsi de suite... C'est ca... on connait déja tout ca. L'imbécile avait pourtant raison dans a ce point de vue. „Le Dieu dorti Réveillez-le!

4. *Le 20 Avril 1995*

C'est seulement dans la Zone qu'on peut essayer quelque chose. Là, entre l'Université Écologique et La Banque Hokaido, ou les ordures de tous les quartiers se mêlent comme les eaux des rivières a l'embouchure. Surtout on affiche le Défi. Pourrait-il naître ailleurs! C'est vrai, timide encore... Au début... A peine gazouille-t-it...

J'y connais bien les bars. Quand j'étais encore un gosse je les ai souvent visités...

„L'Ange traîne"... „Aladin"... „Le dernier Nicador"... „Fetiche"... „Le Traîtement Ambulant"... Hier j'ai repris le même trajet... J'essayais me souvenir, a revivre... Je cherchais... En deux heures j'ai compris... des changements partout. La mode, encore au début, a été lancée par un certain Paul (surnommé le Paladin). Des grappe de verrues, visibles... Des nez diformes où à la Pinocchio... Des oreilles pendantes surgies des coiffures

qui t'enchevetent le regard... Des yeux... bigles... qui manquent souvent. Des caries méticuleusement cultivées... Plusieurs choses, au fond infantiles. Ca suffit comme terrain de culture.

Et puis la tenssion qui flotte dans l'air. Lisible dans les regards des gens... dans les automates abîmés... On la devine derriére les vêtements humides... sous les tâches de moisi. On est sur le point de la toucher. Pourquoi moi, je ne pourrais pas être le devolteur? Pourquoi pas? Bien que je ne me sois pas du tout revenu a la maison. Non! Ces lieux me semblaient étrangers, bien que... Non, non! Sans doute non! Les intérieurs me semblent des images de synthese d'un jeu video de categorie B... Les personnages assis dans les tables scanent en 3D.

Ionuţ BĂNUŢĂ

L'odeur aseptique. Ou sont les tapets op-d'art? Et Grattignol, et Le Nain, et Matusalem avec les vieilles contes de fées sur des villas blanches et des femmes sereines qui te réveillent avec l'arôme d'une bouillante café? L'Ethos est changé. A chaque pas on voit des nouveaux-druide paranolaques, des luciféliques pasteurs, des apathiques eroto-expertes... un „Jeune Dawos" avec le regard perdu... c'est un cloaque qui pue jusqu'au ciel.

Le 1 Mai 1995

Je peux le faire! Surement! Mais comment? Les prédicateurs sont à tout pas, des prophetes aussi, des maîtres d'école... Qui crient montés sur les tables... Guettant dans l'ombre des murs... Pénétrant dans le réseau, quand on ne s'attend pas, on les retrouvent riant dans les moniteurs! Personne ne les regardent. Alors?

Avant-hier j'étais a „L'Ange traîné". Je bus une „exitus" avec du citron. Je n'avais pas envie de vivre... J'aurais voulu aarocher une eroto-prof. Un peu de mouvement, ca ne fait du mal à personne. Et soudain le barman change là chaîne de télé. Il passe sur MTV B. Quelques idiots criaient là... sans force... des cabotins... ayant des gestes affectés... C'est faux... Aujourd'hui personne ne chante live... Seulement deux où trois groupes apparaissent chaque anneé, mais sont déjà fini apres le premier succes. Et pas dans la Zone... C'est plus qu'une habitude a braquer les yeux a la télé. C'est un mode de vie qui tue le temps, élégamment et discrètement.

Donc une idée est née à mon esprit... Elle n'a pas eu le temps de se former... La rixe a eclaté. Elle m'a dérangé, pourquoi mentir... bien qu'en général... Mais alors je devais penser... Dieu sait qui l'a amorcée... J'ai le talent de me trouver au milieu des événements. Comme si j'étais en train de les chercher... Personne ne me les montre... J'ai donné moi aussi... sans savoir ou... A gauche... Au droite... Sans choisir. Sans partialité... Tous sont coupables. Et puis ca me faisait bien... J'ai un peu agité mon sang... Je soufflais un peu... la soupape...

Les flics ont régardé les choses autrement. Comme d'habitude. On-peut-les expliquer la moindre des choses? Je les tuerais les premiers... pas par haine... mais par principe. Ils pensent de même, probablement a notre égard. Mais ils ont un autre mode d'agir, un autre style, un vrai art! Ils m'ont battu systématiquement... soigneusement... professionnellement... bien qu'avec dégout... mais sans qu'ils me rompent quelque chose d'important. Eh, la Loi... en dehors, et dans le fourgon aussi. Quand je me suis réveillé j'ai vu deux mecs, sûrement tirés d'une la moindre des poubelles. Il me regardaient. Homo Pubelus! „Salut" ont-ils dit, en riant et j'ai immédiatement compris que je travaillerais bien avec eux. Intuition? Revelation? Non? Quelqu'un me l'a chucoté ou pas même au moins. Je respectais un scénario.

Le lendemain, donc hier, „Guru Amoc" este né. Je n'ai pas peur maintenent des choses irreversibles.

5. Quand je creverai

La musique: *Ezechil Bash*
Le texte: *Andy Bender*

Le monde va crever dans un lac de vomissements
En gémissant sous un Dieu en coma
Quand mes putréfies os échapperont aux angoisses
Oui, il va crever, ouil
Oui, il va crever, ouil

Le refrain: L'hystérie, l'anarchie
Elles sont venues, en béquilles, de Russie!

La mort est le sel jetté en soupe
Rien avant, rien aprés
Donc sors le Colt du téroir
Et tire, veri, sur tous ceux qui se trouvent dans la bari
Oui, tire, ouil
Oui, tire, ouil

Le refrain: L'hystérie, l'anarchie
Elles sont venues,en béquilles, de Russie!

Je suis légume, un pus, un crachat,
Je suis le pour, chatoyant et empiffré,
Mais quand je me mettrai a mourir
Le monde puera comme un oeuf couvi
Oui, il puera, ouil
Oui, il puera, ouil

Le refrain: L'hystérie, l'anarchie
Elles sont venues, en béquilles, de Russie!

Putains, argent, les cigarettes avec de "l'herbe"
Appetit et films, gratter en barbe,
Tout ca passera, une fois, ca passera,
Raccourdissez-le,
Oui, raccourdissez-le, ouil
Oui, raccourdissez-le!

Le refrain: L'hystérie, l'anarchie
Elles sont venues, en béquilles, de Russie!

Et on me trouvera en criant, en hurlant
Avec le „Non" – la seule pensée,
Quand je mourirait dans le final,
Quand cette fin viendrent.
Oui, „Non", Ouil
Oui, „Non", Ouil
Le refrain:

6. *Le 20 Novembre 1995*

Un jour l'aste... Nous avons eu environ mille fans au concert. Evidemment, seulement, des misérables qui le soufflent dans la bouche quand ils parlent... Ils te regardent innocement... fixement... Ils attendent... La plupart me sont inconnus.

Ils n'ont jamais entendu sûrement d'Andy, le chanteur d'Industrial scream. „Guru Amoc", le mec qui crache sa haine partout, n'importe quand et n'importe comment, les a réunis.

Quelques'uns, le genre syndicaliste, ont commencé a crier... pour les diriger... pour les organiser... Mon Dieu! Ces idiots n'ont rien compris. Allo!... Je veux une armée des nihillistes... répandue dans la ville... sans avoir des liens entre eux... Chacun doit agir à

son gré. Tout systeme contient la maladie de la décomposition... Tout chaîne peut-être brisée... toute tumeur peut-être extirpée. Mais on a l'embarras du choix. Sorry, mais les bonnes feés n'existent que dans les jeux interactifs pour gamins. Ici, dans la ville, on voit que des idols déchus et des vampires les gencisves pourriés ...

Le monde vous semble exécrable? Vous en avez assez? Il vous pese sur le coeur?... Vous voules un autre monde? Mais tout d'abord vous devez le detruire! Vos pantalons trembient? Vous avez peur qu' APRES rien ne suivra?... The end of the road?... Eh... C'est cal C'est le destin! Dois je vous dire que toutes les choses ont une fin? Alors? À quoi bon attendre? Nous pataugeons dans la boue seulement par l'habitude?... Seulement parce que les autres nous ont enseignés ainsi? Abrégez l'agonie du monde en métastase! Détruisez le mur, les systémes! Elibérez l'entropie! Le chaos éternel et stable! L'égalité par les ruines! Criez la symphonie de la destruction jusqu'a ce que les tympans des rugueux crevent.

Rien de nouveau d'ailleurs. On salt déja tout ca.

7. „Une religion de la haine ou l'hysterie collective?"

Tout en allant vers la Palais, le Président Dalman blessé par deux coups de feu. Les bâtiments de l'administration publique dévastés. Un prêtre aspergé avec de l'essence et brûle devant l'église Sainte Ecaterina. Un autre poignardé, milieu de la Place du Travail. Les groupes de la police fuyant les jeunes kamikaze barrés d'explosif. L'express déraillé à l'heure de pointe. Les chrétiens expulsés de la Cathédrale de Saint Jean, poursuivis dans les rues, lynchés, pendus comme il y a deux mille ans d'ailleurs.

Voila le sommaire bilan des dernières trois jours. Un affreux bilan. Le vent de la folie a t-ilcommencé a souffler au-dessus de la ville? Où est-ce un complot dément contre tous? Tout de même, le Défi, la pseudo-ideologie née dans des quelques esprits malsains et répandue avec succes dans la zone, parmi les mécontents toujours facilement a trouver dans toute société libre, ne peut être étrangère a ces événements. Espérons que le gouvernement (coupable de la tension créée) recconnaisse son échec. Pour l'instant les troupes spéciales de l'armée ont occupée les points-clé de le capitale. Est-ce une solution? Oui, nous l'espérons. Nous en reparlerons peut-être de cette semaine dont chaque jour est devenu une nuit. Une nuit de Saint Bartholomé.

Plaise o Dieu!

Article unique apparu dans le demier numéro de quotidien „L'Oeil publique" 25.11.1995

8. *Le 28 Novembre 1995*

J'ai peur. J'ai une peur terrible. La terreur m'a envahi... presque inopinément... Je dis „presque" parce que tout d'abord je lui ai senti l'odeur aigre, sauvage, l'odeur de cachette. Elle m'a cogné la poitrine... Commes la vague d'air chaud d'un débarras oublié... Elle s'est fixé dans mon cerveau... Elle s'est écoulée dans mes mains... Dans mes jambes... Mon corps tremble sans pouvoir la controler... Je veux crier... Courrir... Me cacher... C'est tout'ce que je veux... La depasséé, mon Dieu, la perdre...

Les muscles ne m'obeissent pas. Iis sont en bois, en roc. J'avale ma salive... La langue enflée, rugueuse, m'a m'est rempli la bouche... Et je haiète. Comme si mes poumons ont brusquement décidé à compenser le repos de mon corps. Calm...

Lucide... Je m'appele Andy. Le défi me soutient... Ma réligion c'est la haine... Mon but c'est la mort. Oui, je m'appele Andy...

Je veux savoir ou je suis, comme j'y suis arrivé... L'innconnu m'effraye. L'incompris. Je me rappelle.

Je me suis caché dans le chambre-réserve, entre les doubles murs du living... J'étais un peu satisfait. Content de l'évolution des choses... Autant que j'en peux... Les radios communiqualent des infos réjouissantes... les radios qui existaient encore. Donc Ezechil, Vlady et les autres n'ont perdu le temps vainement. Mon rôle est fini. J'ai été un bouton-pression d'initiation, rien de plus.

Et puis seul, dans l'air suffoquant de cette chambre, la haine m'a ectasé. Je pouvais me le permettre...

„Arrivé, maintenant, au bout de la voie,
Moi, pour vous, dans la brume et la fumée."

Je me suis maîtrisé pendant des mois entiers... J'ai enterré la haine... Oh, quel effort! Mais j'en ai gardé les bourgeons. J'aurais effrayé les idiots autrement. Exalté je fus de l'essence et quand je me desirais fanatique... Je me suis montré lucide, pas froide... sevère..., sans cynisme... implacable... tenace... convaicant. On voyait à l'oeil nu les résultats. Le monde suffoquait, agonisait... „Viens maintenant haine, viens" j'ai crié. "Habille-moi, pénetre, suffoque-moi! Tout doit mourir! Le baquet doit dispparaitre! Il doit éclater comme la bulle du savon!" Et je m'y suis réveillé...

Gris... Froid... Humidité... Silence... Ni même les palpitations de mon coeur ne me troublent... C'est la mort? Suis-j'arrivé Au-Dela? Non, on ne peut pas mourir ainsi... Comme en passant dans une autre chambre... Non! Alors?... Le monde... Non, pas un mot de plus! Ce serait trop droie!

Je bouge mes mains. J'essaye de le faire. Je sens, sans doute, mais... Je regarde en bas... On ne voit rien... Il n'y-a rien. Le gris, seulement... La source et l'effet... comme si j'étais tombé en mon intérieur et je m'y regardais... sans distinguer mes limites.

Et puis la lumiére est apparue brusquement. Le soleil. Je ferme les yeux. Je reste ainsi... en attendant... Mais pas pour longtemps. Je laisse le regard s'écouler parmi les pauplères. Le jaune brûlant... Des dunes, des dunes et encore des dunes. Le désert? Où, mon Dieu...

C'est étrange! Les rayons ne me brulent pas. Ma peau est encore froide... Et sous les nues plantes des pied (pourquoi nues, depuis quand,nues? depuis quand, plantes?) je ne sens pas le sable. Je sens une surface lise, neutre, évidement artificielle.

Je retourne le tete a gauche. Je vois pas trés loin, une fontaine avec tous ses accessoires. En plein désert.

J'entends quelques cloquements. Je sais que les balles m'ont transperché. Je ne sens aucune douleur... Je ne sens pas... Mais je le sais... Aucune goutte de sang, bien-sûr. Bien-sûr! Le vent souffle à travers les trous laissés par les balles. Je rirais, si je le pouvais.

Je veux revenir... pour voir l'individu qui a tiré... Je ne réussis pas. J'ai pas la permission... „Tu as raté" je dis et je marche en sautillant vers la fontaine... Je ne l'ai pas voulu... Je n'ai pas soif... Je bois... Je n'ai pas soif et l'eau... que dire... elle n'est pas humide. A coté de la fontaine, j'observe un écran opaque. M'attendait-il ici, depuis toujours? J'en était pas tellement sûr... Je ne l'avais jamais observé auparavant.Il pousse en plein désert de carton, oui, c'est du carton) et s'étend a perte de vue... à gauche,... à droit... en haut... et l'eau que je continue à boire jaillit par mes trous, on aurait dit un puits artésien. Mais, elle n'atteigne pas le sable. Elle disparait en l'air. Je sorte une carotte d'une poche imaginaire. Je la croque...

Silviu JELESNEAC

That's all folks!

Translated by
Sebastian A. Corn &
Tiberiu OPAIȚĂ

First issued in december '92, the "SF Journal" took deep roots in the romanian fandom by it's pro style and the regularity of it's apparitions. This was also due to it's editorial policy, i.e., encouraging of the romanian authors, especially the debutants.

Regarded initially with skepticism (we were not spared the debutant's emotions) by the members of the '80's generation (the new wave as they called themselves) we were lent a hand by those who entered the SF phenomenon after 1990. Afterwards, the others also joined in helping us.

The modern graphics, the diversity of the themes, the critic approach to almost every important SF sphere, guaranteed a certain recognition in the field for our journal. That's why, at the annual romanian SF convention (Romcon '93) we were awarded as the best magazine on 1993. Probably (notice the way we boast!) a better denomination could have been, "the most important magazine" - in fact, we received such a prize this spring, from a private company, "Geovaly SRL" - because our main role was in building a "creators' effervescence", as we call it down here. Where did this lead us to? To the structuring of the '90's generation, counting enough members (number and value comprised!),to initiate an earthquake of the SF Establishment in Romania. You will find some of them in the pages of this special issue.

By the way, this is not our first special issue. We've already had several numbers dedicated to outstanding authors: Isaac Asimov (17), Stephen King (30), William Gibson (35), Ovidiu Bufnilă (35), Mihail Grămescu (79), Serge Brussolo (40), Dan Merişca (47), Norman Spinrad (43), Harlan Ellison (57).

Some other special issues were dedicated to distinct themes in the SF, and to currents, literary workshops and publishing houses in the field. A "cyberpunk special (25), a "'90's generation" special (50), a "Nemira" special(55), a "Dracula" special (60), a "Quo vadis?" special(66), a "Sex fiction" special(69), a "Supernova" special(71), and, of course, the "Eurocon"special (72-73).

Last, but not least, The "Science Fiction Journal" has also a role in linking various groups and individuals implicated in SF. We readily reflect the new editorial issues, the pro and cons in the field, promoting a continuous feed back for the authors and for the readers as well.

Keep them informed, and you will winn the market!

That's our main achievement in the 73 issues we've launched on the romanian fandom.

LUCIAN BABEANU

Adrian Bănuţă

- born the 17th of October, 1971 (from the very beginning he was a nonconformist: his birth certificate states he was born on the 16th - as I tell you, they reckoned his foreseeing the day he was born! - as a result, he became the youngest chief editor in Romania, and perhaps in the world)

In 1985, his brother enlistens him in the "Pozitronic" literary workshop. Between 1989 and 1991, he coordinates it's activity.

His first short short story, "Romance", wins the 1st prize in 1987. This achievement decides him to write more, with the hope of earning his money from publishing. In 1988, he audiates aesthetic classes and is nominated for a mainstream short story at the National contest "Excelsior".

He embarks on writing SF because of his brother's insistences.

Ionuţ Bănuţă

- born the 5th of January, 1970. He spent some time in three literary workshops ("Pozitronic" - Buzău, a founding member, which he coordinated between 1987 -1988; "Prospectart" - Bucureşti, a former member; "String", founding member) now being a "Honourable Member of the Quo Vadis? literary workshop".

He won his first prize in graphics in 1989 and made his debut in 1990, in the "Contemporanul" almanac.

In 1991, he publishes a journal entitled "The Twilight Zone" (he has nothing to do with the name!), but the economist embezzles with the money and the journal can't be published anymore.

He published graphics and various pamphlets in "Quasar", "Anticipaţia", "Jurnalul SF", "Bursa de Est", "Jurnalul de Craiova", in the "Ştiinţă şi Anticipaţie" almanac, in the "Thera Mirrors Anthology". He was first published as a cover graphician in 1993 - He designed the cover for "Word for World is Forest", by U.K. Le Guin.

In 1994 he will issue his first anthology, a romanian cyberpunk anthology, entitled, "Cyberpunk Blues".

He also translates from french, in his spare time. Unfortunately, he ran out of time.

Romanian SF Anthology
NEMIRA '94

Short stories selected by Romulus Bărbulescu & George Anania and presented by N. Lee Wood & Norman Spinrad

nautilus

Ovidiu Bufnilă Cotizo Draia Silviu Genescu Mihail Grămescu Răzvan Haritonovici Dănuţ Ivănescu Cristian Lăzărescu Lucian Merişca Alexandru Mironov Mircea Opriţă Radu Pavel Gheo Cristian Tudor Popescu Adrian Preda Alexandru Ungureanu Dănuţ Ungureanu

This work is radically different on every level, from the surreal storylines, to the intense magic realism of the imagery, to the dense superheated energy of the prose itself. Even in English translation, you can read a paragraph of just about any story in this book, and know that you are reading *Romanian* science fiction, and not something else.

This is not "science-fiction" in the traditional sense, no hard nuts-n-bolts of technological wonders within a plodding, logical story. This is bizarre psychological fiction, a ride on the wild side of the subconcious. The mythical creatures in these stories are the smoldering hallucinations that live within the souls of ordinary people, emerging from the twisting shadowy heart beating within us all.

NORMAN SPINRAD **N. LEE WOOD**

Something about Nemira:

Date of birth: 1991, Bucharest, Romania (bizarrery: Nemira is a mountain in the Romanian Carpathians; if you doubt that, look out the Britannica atlas: Nemira Mare, 1,649 meters). 'Nautilus' is one of the 18 series of Nemira, and the most famous sf series published in Romania. The proof: two awards in 1992 and 1993 given by the jury of the National Conventions, and another one in 1992 for the best sf magazine (the meteoric periodical 'Nautilus', which dissapeared temporarily). A better proof is a long file of authors: Herbert, Asimov, Dick, Spinrad, Anderson, Strugatski, etc., and last, but not least, a few of those included in this anthology. The 50th 'Nautilus' book will appear during the euROcon... This Anthology!

These are the authors of NAUTILUS series. Join them!

Brian Aldiss	Philip K. Dick	Jody Lynn Nye
George Anania	Clayton Emery	Cornelia Omescu
Poul Anderson	Rose Estes	Marco Pensante
Isaac Asimov	Frank Herbert	Renato Pestriniero
Robert Asprin	Bill Fawcett	Roberto Quaglia
Camil Baciu	Mihail Grămescu	Anna Rinonapoli
Romulus Bărbulescu	Gérard Klein	Jacques Sadoul
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